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Dissertation

THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHIES OF SØREN KIERKEGAARD AND NIKOLAI FREDERIK SEVERIN GRUNDTVIG

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. The Problem of the Dissertation

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard and Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig were two of the key thinkers in nineteenth century Denmark. Kierkegaard's philosophical influence has spread around the world through the philosophical movement of existentialism. On the other hand, Grundtvig's influence has been largely confined to Denmark. Both men devoted a significant portion of their thinking to social issues and the theory of society. It is the theory of society which will concern us as we examine the writings of these two contemporaries.

The problem of the dissertation is, therefore, to analyze the theory of society as developed by Kierkegaard and by Grundtvig, to note their points of agreement and divergence, and to evaluate their descriptions of society and their prescriptions for its improvement.

It is important to identify the precise character and extent of Søren Kierkegaard's theory of society together with its setting in his thought as a whole as part of a contribution to a theory of value.

Kierkegaard's thought should not be studied in isolation from other important intellectual currents of the time. One of the most significant social thinkers in Denmark was Grundtvig, a fact acknowledged by the attention which Kierkegaard pays to him.

Grundtvig himself, while he is very well known within Denmark itself, is not widely known in other circles. His social thought, which was such a great influence in his own country, deserves a greater circulation among scholars who do not read Danish.

2. Limitations

This study will be limited to the social theories of Kierkegaard and Grundtvig as expressed in their own writings. The broader questions as to the influences upon their thought by other thinkers as well as of their own influence upon subsequent thought and history will not be considered unless directly relevant to the understanding of some facet of their thought as such.

3. Related Research

Several doctoral dissertations have been written which have some bearing on the subject under consideration, but none of them focuses on the comparative study of the social philosophies of Kierkegaard and Grundtvig.[1] The same is true of several books and articles which provide resources for the dissertation but do not duplicate its problem or approach. Representative of these are: E. L. Allen, "Grundtvig and Kierkegaard," Congregational Quarterly (1946); Herman Lund, "Søren Kierkegaard og N. F. S. Grundtvig," Journal de'Eglise de la confession de'Augsbourg (Paris, 1877); Søren Holm, Grundtvig und Kierkegaard: Parallelen und Kontraste (übersetzt aus dem danishen Manuskript des Verfassers von Gunther Jungbluth, 1956); Henning Høirup, "Grundtvig and Kierkegaard: Their Views on the Church," Theology Today (1955-56); Llewellyn Jones, "Kierkegaard or Grundtvig?" Christian Century (1952); Steffan Steffensen, Grundtvig und Kierkegaard (Ausblick I: Lubeck, 1950); Carl Weltzer, Grundtvig og Søren Kierkegaard (København: Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag, 1952).

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[1] For example: Charles R. Magel, "An Analysis of Kierkegaard's Philosophic Categories" (unpublished Doctor's thesis, University of Minnesota, 1959-60); A. E. Sovic, "New Life in Old Forms: The Emergence and Victory of Ecclesiastical Pietism in Denmark-Norway, 1700-1746" (unpublished Doctor's thesis, Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary, 1959-60); Knud Rasmussen, "Søren Kierkegaard's Political Ideas" (unpublished Doctor's thesis, Rutgers, 1965); S. R. Moore, "The Social Implications of the Category of the Single One in the Thought of Søren Kierkegaard" (unpublished Doctor's thesis, Drew University, 1964); M. F. Christopherson. "Søren Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Communication: An Approach to the Communication of Existential Knowledge" (unpublished Doctor's thesis, Purdue University, 1965).

4. Method

The method employed in this study is the exposition and analysis of the published works of Kierkegaard and Grundtvig. In the case of Kierkegaard, the standard Danish edition of his works, Samlede Vaerker,[1] will be used for reference. In addition, the relevant passages from Kierkegaard's Journal will be consulted as required.[2] In particular, the passages in the Journal written between the years of 1848 and 1855 will be found to be relevant, since Kierkegaard did not have the opportunity to develop this material for publication. Due attention will be given to En Literair Anmeldelse (A Literary Review),[1] a work which contains many significant passages relating to Kierkegaard's view of society.

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[1] Søren Kierkegaard, Samlede Vaerker, ed. A. B. Drachmann, J. L. Heiberg, and H. O. Lange (København: Gyldendal, 1962).

[2] Søren Kierkegaard, Søren Kierkegaards Papirer, ed. P. A. Heiberg, V. Kuhr, and E. Torsten (København: Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag, 1909-1948).

In the case of Grundtvig, his published works in the standard Danish edition, Vaerker i Udvalg,[2] will be examined. Grundtvig was a prolific writer, though many of his works are poetic and literary rather than philosophical in character. Thus, for example, his writings on the ancient Anglo-Saxon chronicles are not in substance relevant to the dissertation.

5. Organization

Chapter II will be devoted to a consideration of the basic concepts of Kierkegaard's thought. The stages will be characterized, the important connection between truth and subjectivity will be examined, and Kierkegaard's concept of existence investigated. In Chapter III we shall consider Kierkegaard's social philosophy, beginning with his view of actual society, including the family, the press, the state and the actual church. The chapter will then characterize Kierkegaard's conception of the ideal, noting the ambiguities inherent in his use of the conception.

Chapter IV will be devoted to Grundtvig's philosophical position; his life, aesthetics, epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics will be summarized. Based on his philosophical position, Chapter V will examine his social philosophy which is based upon the concept of spirit: in the church, in the nation, and in the school.

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[1] Søren Kierkegaard, Samlede Vaerker, Vol XIV.

[2] N. F. S. Grundtvig, Vaerker i Udvalg, ed. G. Christensen and Hal Koch (København: Gyldendal, 1940-1949). In the following pages, when the Danish edition is footnoted, the translation is the writer's.

In Chapter VI, we shall engage in the comparison and contrast of the social philosophies of Kierkegaard and Grundtvig, noting their similarities and differences and evaluating their respective positions. Chapter VII will be the summary and conclusion of the dissertation. With this organizational plan in mind, let us proceed to the argument of the dissertation.

CHAPTER II

THE BASIC CONCEPTS OF SØREN KIERKEGAARD'S THOUGHT

We shall analyze in this chapter Søren Kierkegaard's basic working concepts. Following a brief biography and an explanation of what he meant by his "authorship" (Forfatterskabet), we shall proceed to the exposition of Kierkegaard's thought. Of particular interest in our study will be such basic working concepts as the stages, subjectivity and existence. Once this initial summary is complete, we shall be in a position to understand the implications which Kierkegaard's particular philosophy of existence holds for social philosophy and the definition of society.

1. Kierkegaard's Life

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard was born in Copenhagen in 1813 and died in the same city in 1855.[1] His father was a devout and wealthy merchant who left a comfortable inheritance to his son. Søren attended the university, studied philosophy and theology, and devoted his effort to writing. A year before his death, he initiated a public attack upon the established church which mystified his contemporaries who had considered him conservative in religious and political matters.[2]

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[1] Walter Lowrie, Kierkegaard (2 Vols.; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), I, xvii, xviii.

[2] Ibid., 565.

2. Kierkegaard's "Authorship"

By his "authorship" Kierkegaard did not mean merely whatever he had written that had been published, but he understood the word to mean his general intent in writing for religious purposes. In the important book, The Point of View for My Work as An Author,[1] he writes:

> The contents of this little book affirm, then, what I truly am as an author, that I am and was a religious author, that the whole of my work as an author is related to Christianity, to the problem "of becoming a Christian," with a direct or indirect polemic against the monstrous illusion we call Christendom, or against the illusion that in such a land as ours all are Christians of a sort.[2]

On the basis of what he declares to be the fundamental unity of all his work as an author, Kierkegaard then classifies his books, beginning with Either/Or, into three groups. This classification is the same as the stages on life's way. The first is the group of aesthetic works: Either/Or (1843), Fear and Trembling (1843), Repetition (1843), The Concept of Dread (1844), Prefaces (1844), Philosophical Fragments (1844), the Stages on Life's Way (1845) and eighteen edifying discourses of various dates.

The second classification, like the ethical stage, provides the transition from the first to the third group. This contains only one work, the Concluding Unscientific Postscript (1846).

The third group consists of the purely religious works, Edifying Discourses in Various Spirits (1847), The Works of Love (1847),

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[1] Søren Kierkegaard, Samlede Vaerker, XVIII, Synspunket for min Forfatter-Virksomhed, ed. A. B. Drachmann (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1964).

[2] Ibid., 81.

Christian Discourses (1848), "along with a little aesthetic article, The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress."[1]

Although his works present to us a variety of expression, Kierkegaard conceived them to display a unity of purpose, which is what he meant by his technical designation of his "authorship." He understood his own literary production instrumentally in the sense that the works were meant to induce in the reader the development of an individual philosophy of existence. We shall view the stages in this light.

3. The Stages

The "Stages on Life's Way" are the dialectic of existence whereby the spirit is actualized in the form of the individual existent. By dialectic, Kierkegaard means dialogue in the sense in which it was developed by Socrates.[2] Socrates initially assumes that he does not know anything to teach to anyone else. The partner in the conversation typically claims knowledge. As the knowledge is tested by the questioning of Socrates, the dialectical process ends with the negative result that neither one knows anything. However, as the false knowledge was demolished, the positive result is that Socrates' partner has been set free to know himself. The indirect relationship between the two individuals is made possible by irony. This indirectness is what enables the individual to awaken to the ideal aspect of his existence.

Kierkegaard presents three existential possibilities or "stages on life's way": the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious.[1] It may be asked whether there is any systematic justification for these three stages or whether they are purely arbitrary. Kierkegaard states that "as an experimenter I merely set the categories in motion in order to behold at my ease what they require, without concerning myself with the question whether anybody has done it or can do it."[2] Thus Kierkegaard intends the spheres of existence to be hypothetical in character. This raises the question of the verification of their adequacy. The verification of the spheres, as the truth in any sense, is found in subjectivity.[3] This doctrine will be examined in a later section. What it means in this context is that the individual has within himself the means for deciding whether the categories which Kierkegaard has set in motion adequately characterize the principles of life on those occasions which he terms stages on life's way. Specifically, does the reader recognize himself in the categories? Kierkegaard believes that his characterization or hypothesis is correct provided that one considers the possibility honestly. By "honestly," he means free from self-deception.[4]

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[1] Ibid., 85.

[2] Søren Kierkegaard, The Concept of Irony, trans. Lee Capel (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 287.

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[1] Søren Kierkegaard, Stages on Life's Way, trans. Walter Lowrie (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), 422.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Søren Kierkegaard (Johannes Climacus), Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments, trans. David Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 187.

[4] Kierkegaard (Johannes de Silentio), Stages on Life's Way, 448, 449.

What the aesthetic stage requires is "enjoyment-perdition."[1] That is to say, the characterizing elements of this sphere are pleasure and aimlessness. The self, in the aesthetic sphere, is dispersed on the level of sense, impulse, and emotion. Absent from this stage are both fixed moral standards and a determinative religious faith. The aesthetic stage might be characterized as natural in the sense of the "natural man" who lives on a hedonistic basis. The self-contradiction arising in the aesthetic stage is boredom. It is in the attempt to escape this boredom the aesthetician attempts to refine his pleasures and to alternate them as in "the rotation method."[2] The pursuit of pleasure thus becomes more important than the attainment of pleasure.

What the ethical stage requires is "action-victory."[3] This heroic imagery indicates that choice is the basis of the ethical. Form is given to life in this sphere by determinate moral standards and obligations. For example, the marriage contract takes the place of the aesthetic aim of seduction. John the Seducer gives way to the Judge with his praise of married life. Time--which was feared by the aesthete--is extolled by the ethical representative as providing history and continuity for married love.[4] Marriage is the union between natural inclination and social duty. Marriage is the union of the individual and the universal. Whenever one accepts his own personal duty he thereby becomes the medium of the universal. It is the characteristic of the ethical stage that man eliminates all wishful thinking about the past and is willing to choose to be himself. Duty is not to be understood, as in the Kantian sense, as moral law. Rather, duty is an inward summons; it is always *my* duty. Kierkegaard does not make a rigid separation of duty from inclination.

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[1] Kierkegaard (Climacus), Concluding Unscientific Postscript, 261.

[2] Søren Kierkegaard (Victor Eremita), Either/Or, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), I, 279.

[3] Kierkegaard (Climacus), Concluding Unscientific Postscript, 261.

[4] Kierkegaard (Eremita), Either/Or, II, 130.

The ethical stage breaks down at the point of the consciousness of guilt. When the individual recognizes the gap between his duty and his performance, he sees that the ethical stage is incompletely integrated: "Against God we are always in the wrong."[1] When the individual discovers the category of sin, he is ready to discover the sphere of religious life in the strict sense.[2]

What the religious stage requires is suffering.[3]

> The religious does not consist in a direct proportion between strength and suffering, but in the inwardness where man relates himself to himself. The fact that "self" is emphasized here suffices to show that in the religious sphere self-torment is regarded differently, but it does not suffice, says the religious, to justify the fact that individuals who have their whole existence in the aesthetic jumble things up and that the religious orators, in spite of all their phrases and holy words, have no pure categories.[4]

Kierkegaard chose suffering as the characterizing element in the religious sphere because of the tension existing between the natural and the ideal in man. That is, the ideal, which is first seen through the universal demands of the ethical sphere, is then seen to be the expression of the distinctly religious principle of consciousness. "So with us human beings in general. Our whole earthly existence is a kind of illness."[1] That "kind of illness" is the "riddle" that in this "temporal life" there also is to be found the "infinite" and the "eternal" which one is admonished to accept as the proper guide in life.[2] It is the acceptance and affirmation of this paradoxical knowledge that causes the suffering which characterizes the religious mode of existence. Thus:

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[1] *Ibid.*, 355.

[2] Kierkegaard (Frater Taciturnus), *Stages on Life's Way*, 407.

[3] Kierkegaard (Climacus), *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 261.

[4] Kierkegaard (Taciturnus), *Stages on Life's Way*, 422,423.

> The significance of the religious suffering is that it is a dying away from immediacy; its reality consists in its essential persistence; but it belongs to the inwardness of a man, and must not express itself outwardly, as in the monastic movement.[3]

Kierkegaard divides the religious level of existence into two parts: "religiousness A" and "paradoxical religiousness." His definition of these two parts is as follows:

> If the individual is inwardly defined by self-annihilation before God, then we have religiousness A. If the individual is paradoxically dialectic, every vestige of original immanence being annihilated and all connection cut off, the individual being brought to the utmost verge of existence, then we have the paradoxical religiousness.[4]

In other words, the viewpoint of religiousness A is that personal existence is only one moment within the person's eternal consciousness. Thus the fact of existing is a low thing, an inferior facet of life which prevents the person from realizing his infinitely higher potentialities. On the other hand, in paradoxical religiousness, or "B", the fact of existing, although as "paradoxically accentuated" still a "lowlier thing,"[1] is so much higher than in religiousness A that it becomes clear that only by existing does the individual become eternal. Thus it can be said that existence "gives rise" to a determinant which is infinitely higher than existence, existence transcends itself in the eternal, in religion paradoxically conceived. In religiousness A there is the constant danger that the fact of existence will be dissolved into the eternity behind. This danger does not affect religiousness B because it is

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[1] Kierkegaard (Climacus), Concluding Unscientific Postscript, 403.

[2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., 446. [4] Ibid., 507.

> discriminative, selective, and polemical: only upon a definite condition do I become blessed, and as I absolutely bind myself to this condition, so do I exclude every other man who does not thus bind himself.[2]

It is important to note that the dialectic of the spheres of existence is, for Kierkegaard, a dialectic of discontinuity. That is to say, the progression from one stage to the other is not by means of conceptual mediation but rather by means of choice, self-commitment. The individual does not advance by an act of the intellect, but by an act of the will. It is in this manner that spirit is actualized, not, as with Hegel, in the form of the all-comprehensive universal, but rather in the form of the existing individual.

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[1] Ibid., 508.

[2] Ibid., 516.

4. Truth and Subjectivity

If the spirit is actualized in the form of the existing individual, as we noted in the preceding section, truth is also validated only by the individual. Thus, one of the most significant terms in Kierkegaard's writing is "subjectivity." The main reference of this term is to explain and unite truth and reality. The problem, as Kierkegaard approaches it initially, is:

> Whether truth is defined more empirically, as the conformity of thought and being, or more idealistically, as the conformity of being with thought, it is, in either case, important carefully to note what is meant by being.[1]

Being, he continues, is to be understood as "concrete empirical being,"[2] hence incomplete and in process of becoming. Therefore Kierkegaard, unlike Hegel, does not investigate reality in general. Kierkegaard instead asks about the reality of a particular something:

> Existence itself, namely, existence as it is in the individual who raises the question and himself exists, keeps the two moments of thought and being apart, so that reflection presents him with two alternatives. For an objective reflection the truth becomes an object, something objective, and thought must be pointed away from the subject. For a subjective reflection the truth becomes a matter of appropriation, of inwardness, of subjectivity, and thought must probe more and more deeply into the subject and his subjectivity.[3]

By "appropriation" Kierkegaard means inner assent, agreement which is a matter of choice and the will. The question of truth is "raised by an existing spirit qua existing."[4] It would be a mistake, Kierkegaard maintains, to "transform the existing spirit into something in general, and thereupon explain everything except the question asked, namely, how an existing subject is related to the truth *in concreto*."[1] For Kierkegaard, the only proper object of thought becomes the individual's own existence.

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[1] Ibid., 169. [2] Ibid., 170. [3] Ibid., 171. [4] Ibid.

Thus, Kierkegaard defines truth in these terms:

> *An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of the most passionate inwardness is the truth*, the highest truth attainable for an *existing* individual.[2]

The existing individual, limited in time, is obliged to make decisions on some basis. These are the decisions by which he lives his life, and yet the basis for these decisions, based in process, are in the strict sense objectively uncertain. This is not to deny the existence of objective and impersonal truth. But such truth--such as mathematics--is irrelevant to the individual's life of total self-commitment in the sense that he does not stake his whole being on it.[3]

It may help to clarify this point if we digress for a moment. In the stages on life's way we could trace the difference in the mode of existence which resulted whenever a man ceased to live by merely following his natural impulses and drives. When he instead began to question the first mode of existence he thereby took deliberate account of his own being in its particularity. He saw himself as separate from the crowd or the herd, which operates on the lowest level of natural inclination.

In this manner the individual becomes aware of the difference between himself as subject and as object. That is, as a subject he reflects upon himself. As an object he is an empirical being. The individual does not make this distinction disinterestedly. Rather, this distinction affects his life, for a man judges the empirical self by the criterion of the ideal self. The ascription of value to the subject in this analysis of the self is not insignificant. While initially a comparative matter, Kierkegaard's preference for the ideal over whatever values the natural may be said to have becomes increasingly pronounced in his later writings, especially in the later passages of his Journal, as we shall observe in the next chapter. As the criterion of the ideal self is applied to various facets of life, the individual is said to have left the aesthetic sphere of existence for the higher spheres, the ethical and the religious.

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[1] *Ibid*., 172.

[2] *Ibid*., 182.

[3] We might say, in other terms, that Kierkegaard is expounding a probabilistic theory of truth supplemented with a Jamesian will to believe.

One further consideration remains to be noted in this context. The criterion of the ideal is applied not by means of thought, but by means of action. An act of choice, not a pure thought, is what transforms the empirical self into the ideal self, or rather, is how the self chooses itself as an existential ego.

> Between the action as represented in thought on the one hand, and the real action on the other, between the possibility and the reality, there may in respect of of content be no difference at all. But in respect of form, the difference is essential. Reality is the interest in action, in existence.[1]

By "action" is not meant necessarily the external deed, but principally the internal intention, the subjective decision. It is the will which transforms the action which is conceived into a real action. This is "the leap," which is the category of decision.[1]

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[1] Ibid., 304.

It can be seen from this digression that this is some of the background for Kierkegaard's statement that "subjectivity is truth, subjectivity is reality."[2] That is, reality is constituted, insofar as it can be known and insofar as that knowledge is of any real concern to existing individuals, by decision. This act of the will is only particular, specific, individual, and subjective. Thus objective truth--such as mathematics--is of no importance for the individual's life, constituted as that life is by individual self-commitment. Such self-commitment is no proper subject for any sort of statistical analysis. This consideration becomes important with regard to Kierkegaard's teaching that any activity which has to do with the crowd, such as politics, is of no ultimate importance for the individual. What is important is "the leap of faith, the qualitative transition from non-belief to belief."[3] This leap of faith, of course, is not a case of blind belief. Kierkegaard's leap is from probability (not ignorance) to the will to believe.

According to Kierkegaard, the

> definition of truth is an equivalent expression for faith. Without risk there is no faith. Faith is precisely the contradiction between the infinite passion of the individual's inwardness and the objective uncertainty.[4]

Eternal truth is not itself a paradox, according to Kierkegaard, but it becomes paradoxical in its relation to us. Thus the truth can only be appropriated for individual existence by the means described.

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[1] Ibid., 91. [2] Ibid., 306. [3] Ibid., 15.

[4] Ibid., 182.

The one point remaining to be noted under the topic of subjectivity is the connection between Kierkegaard's general thought and his social thought on these grounds. This will be the particular topic of the following chapter, where his social thought will be examined in detail. It will suffice at this point to emphasize that Kierkegaard's concept of subjectivity was opposed to the notion of "the crowd." Specifically:

> A crowd--not this crowd or that, the crowd now living or the crowd long deceased, a crowd of humble people or of superior people, of rich or of poor, &c.--a crowd in its very concept is the untruth, by reason of the fact that it renders the individual completely impenitent and irresponsible, or at least weakens his sense of responsibility by reducing it to a fraction.[1]

Kierkegaard is saying that the "very concept" of the crowd is "number, the numerical, a number of noblemen, millionaires, high dignitaries, &c.--as soon as the numerical is involved it is 'crowd', 'the crowd'."[2] In other words, the philosophical emphasis on the superiority of the universal to the particular is mistaken. It is not true, according to Kierkegaard, that man realizes his true essence when he transcends his mere particularity and becomes a moment in the life of the universal. It does not matter whether the universal is held to be the State or absolute Thought or Humanity of the economic class. Kierkegaard is saying that the highest self actualization of the individual is a matter of the individual will, of subjective choice, and that this is the only truth that exists for the individual.

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[1] Søren Kierkegaard, The Point of View for My Work as An Author: A Report to History, trans. Walter Lowrie (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 112.

[2] Ibid.

> I have endeavoured to express the thought that the world, if not bad, is mediocre, that "what the age demands" is foolishness and frippery, that in the eyes of the world the truth is a ludicrous exaggeration; and that the Good must suffer. I have endeavoured to express the thought that to employ the category "race" to indicate what it is to be a man, and especially as an indication of the highest attainment, is a misunderstanding and mere paganism, because the race, mankind, differs from an animal race not merely by its general superiority as a race, but by the *human* characteristic that every single individual within the race (not merely distinguished individuals but every individual) is more than the race. This follows from the relation of the individual to God, and essentially this is Christianity, whose category, "the individual", is so much derided by this highly lauded Christian age. For to relate oneself to God is a far higher thing than to be related to the race and through the race to God.[1]

Kierkegaard's concept of subjectivity was designed to unify truth and reality by means of what it means to be an existing individual. In so doing, he also made explicit the implication that the pursuit of subjective truth meant the separation of the individual from the crowd, the race, the numerical, and the universal. Only subjectivity, the inwardness of an individual choice, could be the truth, the truth which would enable the individual to progress upward through the spheres of existence.

5. Existence

The "existing individual" is a most important part of

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[1] *Ibid*., 88, 89.

Kierkegaard's formulations, not only through the stages on life's way, but also in the doctrine of subjectivity. The stages on life's way are called spheres of existence. Let us now ask what Kierkegaard meant by the term, "existence."

> Existence itself is superior to any demonstration for existence, and hence it is in the given case stupid to ask for proof. Conversely, the inference from essence to existence is a leap.[1]

This theme, that existence is superior to abstract thought, is one to which Kierkegaard returns several times.

> To prove the existence of one who is present is the most shameless affront, since it is an attempt to make him ridiculous; but unfortunately people have no inkling of this and for sheer seriousness regard it as a pious undertaking. But how could it occur to anybody to prove that he exists, unless one had permitted oneself to ignore him, and now makes the thing all the worse by proving his existence before his very nose? The existence of a king, or his presence is commonly acknowledged by an appropriate expression of subjection and submission--what if in his sublime presence one were to prove that he existed? Is that the way to prove it? No, that would be making a fool of him; for one proves his presence by an expression of submission which may assume various forms according to the customs of the country--and thus it is also one proves God's existence by worship . . . not by proofs.[2]

Thus existence in some sense is the basic datum, the ground of all other distinctions, including the distinctions of abstract thought. It will be noted from the above passage that Kierkegaard does not exclude ascriptions of value from existence, even if, as in the above quotation, they appear primarily as examples. It becomes apparent--more from context than from definition--that Kierkegaard intends "existence" to refer chiefly to human existence. It is on this basis that Kierkegaard can introduce distinctions into his use of the term, so that he can speak of existence "in the loose sense of a so-called existence" as lower in quality than existence properly so called:

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[1] Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, 38.

[2] *Ibid.*, 485.

> It is impossible to exist without passion, unless we understand the word "exist" in the loose sense of a so-called existence. Every Greek thinker was therefore essentially a passionate thinker. I have often reflected how one might bring a man into a state of passion. I have thought in this connection that if I could get him seated on a horse and the horse made to take fright and gallop wildly, or better still, for the sake of bringing the passion out, if I could take a man who wanted to arrive at a certain place as quickly as possible, and hence already had some passion, and could set him astride a horse that can scarcely walk--and yet this is what existence is like if one is to become consciously aware of it.[1]

Existence in Kierkegaard's use provides the reason why abstract thought cannot relate to life as the subject reflects upon his own life:

> The thinker who can forget in all his thinking also to think that he is an existing individual, will never explain life. He merely makes an attempt to cease to be a human being, in order to become a book or an objective something . . . . But it will scarcely be pleasant for him to learn that existence itself mocks everyone who is engaged in becoming purely objective.[2]

Abstract thought cannot explain existence satisfactorily, according to Kierkegaard, because

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[1] Ibid., 276.

[2] Ibid., 85, 86.

> Abstract thought considers both possibility and reality, but its concept of reality is a false reflection, since the medium within which the concept is thought is not reality, but possibility. Abstract thought can get hold of reality only by nullifying it, and this nullification of reality consists in transforming it into possibility.[1]

It could be objected that the existing individual does actually think, and this fact in itself should be enough to indicate that pure thought is able to perform the tasks that Kierkegaard denies to it. Kierkegaard replies:

> When it is impossible to think existence, and the existing individual nevertheless thinks, what does this signify? It signifies that he thinks intermittently, that he thinks before and after. His thought cannot attain to absolute continuity. It is only in a fantastic sense that an existing individual can be constantly *sub specie aeterni*.[2]

Kierkegaard maintains that the individual is *sub specie aeterni*, but not constantly. The existence of the individual is the union of two diverse elements:

> This is what existence is like if one is to become consciously aware of it. Or if a driver were otherwise not especially inclined toward passion, if someone hitched a team of horses to a wagon for him, one of them a Pegasus and the other a worn-out jade, and told him to drive--I think one might succeed. And it is just this that it means to exist, if one is to become conscious of it. Eternity is the winged horse, infinitely fast, and time is a worn-out jade; the existing individual is the driver.

It is clear that Kierkegaard considers existence to be characterized by a synthesis of the eternal and the temporal, of the infinite and the finite.

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[1] *Ibid*., 279. [2] *Ibid*., 293. [3] *Ibid*., 276.

> Existence itself, the act of existing, is a striving, and is both pathetic and comic in the same degree. It is pathetic because the striving is infinite; that is, it is directed toward the infinite, being an actualization of infinitude, a transformation which involves the highest pathos. It is comic, because such a striving involves a self-contradiction.[1]

The character of this self-contradiction can be more accurately understood when we see Kierkegaard's contrast between the systematic Idea and existence on the other hand:

> The systematic Idea is the identity of subject and object, the unity of thought and being. Existence, on the other hand, is their separation. It does not by any means follow that existence is thoughtless; but it has brought about, and brings about, a separation between subject and object, thought and being.[2]

Because of this separation between thought and being, any enterprise of thinking which seeks to comprehend both as a unity is mistaken. It is mistaken because abstract thought seeks to view process as a completed system. Thus:

> An existential system is impossible. An existential system cannot be formulated. Does this mean that no such system exists? By no means; nor is this implied in our assertion. Reality itself is a system--for God; but it cannot be a system for any existing spirit. System and finality correspond to one another, but existence is precisely the opposite of finality.[3]

Speculation, Kierkegaard believes, does not do justice to the facts of human existence by trying to regiment them into unified system of thought. The only adequate kind of thinking, according to Kierkegaard, is existential thinking. That is, because of the contradictory nature of existence, only a kind of thinking that was dialectical and paradoxical would be adequate to the situation. The correct way of thinking must be done by "the existing individual who concentrates all his attention upon the circumstance that he is an existing individual."[1] Thus:

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[1] _Ibid_., 84. [2] _Ibid_., 112. [3] _Ibid_., 107.

> In existence thought is by no means higher than imagination and feeling, but coordinate. In existence the supremacy of thought becomes confusing . . . . If thought speaks deprecatingly of the imagination, imagination in its turn speaks deprecatingly of thought; and likewise with feeling. The task is not to exalt the one at the expense of the other, but to give them an equal status, to unify them in simultaneity; the medium in which they are unified is *existence*.[2]

With this conception as the background, we can give proper importance to Kierkegaard's statement that

> Existence constitutes the highest interest of the existing individual, and his interest in his existence constitutes his reality. What reality is cannot be expressed in the language of abstraction.[3]

Thus, according to Kierkegaard, existence constitutes reality, and reality as so constituted contains as an integral component the element of value. This quality of reality can be increased as the individual progresses upward through the spheres of existence. The basic difference in this process of the increase of value is between the natural and the ideal.

> To have been young, and then to grow older, and finally to die, is a very mediocre form of human existence; this merit belongs to every animal. But the unification of the different stages of life in simultaneity is the task set for human beings. And just as it is an evidence of mediocrity when a human being cuts away all communication with childhood, so as to be a man merely fragmentarily, so it is also a miserable mode of existence for a thinker who is also an existing individual to lose imagination and feeling, which is quite as bad as losing his reason.[4]

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[1] *Ibid.*, 109. [2] *Ibid.*, 310, 311. [3] *Ibid.*, 279. [4] *Ibid.*, 311.

Existence, in Kierkegaard's view, is the basic fact of human life. It thus provides the explanation for the problems which arise for abstract thought which have their explanation in the fact that time and eternity are the two diverse and conflicting factors which are united by human existence. The proper goal of human life is revealed by these same general considerations, namely, that life should aim at the attainment of the higher spheres of existence. The value resulting from this increase in the quality of existence, when chosen by the individual will, indicates life on the level of spirit, above the natural animal level characteristic of the crowd and the numerical. The spheres of existence represent the sum total of human possibilities. One passes through the spheres not in order to leave them behind, but rather to recover them by means of faith so as to exist in them in a new way.

6. Conclusion

The basic concepts of Kierkegaard's thought were existence, subjectivity, and the stages or spheres of existence. We have seen that Kierkegaard conceived of his "authorship" as the expression of a unified concern, the concern of reintroducing Christianity into Christendom. However, he did not pursue this goal in a direct manner, but rather did so indirectly. Thus his writings, just like the stages, were divided into three levels, the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious.

This indirect approach to the communication of what he considered to be true was necessary because of Kierkegaard's notion of the character of existence and the relation of subjectivity. Existence, as we noted, is considered to be superior to abstract thought. Thought must be in character with existence, that is, it must be dialectical and paradoxical. If thought attempts to disregard the importance of emotion and imagination or fantasy, thought will be false.

Objective truth, a "system," is not denied in principle, by Kierkegaard. He only denies that any existing spirit can know or be decisively affected by objective truth. Therefore, the only truth that matters, the only reality that is so constituted, for the individual, is subjective. The implications which this theory holds for life and thought are important and profound. This can be appreciated from one passage in the Concluding Un-scholarly (uvidenskabelig) Postscript:

> Objective thinking is wholly indifferent to subjectivity, and hence also to inwardness and appropriation; its mode of communication is therefore direct. It goes without saying that it need not on that account be at all easy. But it is direct, and lacks the elusiveness and the art of a double reflection, the godly and humane solicitude in communicating itself, which belongs to subjective thinking. It can be understood directly and be recited by rote.[1]

Opposed to such direct communication, which Kierkegaard in any case holds to be impossible for an existing individual, is subjective communication. In the following passage Kierkegaard proposes the ironic situation of an evangelist who tries to communicate subjective truth in a wholly objective manner. By showing the impossibility of such a case, Kierkegaard illustrates the implications which his philosophy of existence hold for social relationships and by extension for the theory of society in the more general sense:

> Suppose that someone wished to communicate the following conviction: Truth is inwardness; there is no objective truth,

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[1] Ibid., 70.

but the truth consists in personal appropriation.[1]

Having set the situation in this ironic manner, he continues:

> Suppose him to display great zeal and enthusiasm for the propagation of this truth, since if only people could be made to listen to it they would of course be saved; suppose he announced it on all possible occasions, and succeeded in moving not only those who perspire easily, but also the hard-boiled temperaments: what then? Why then, there would doubtless be found a few laborers, who had hitherto stood idle in the market-place, and only after hearing this call went to work in the vineyard--engaging themselves to proclaim this doctrine to all. And then what? Then he would have contradicted himself still further, as he had contradicted himself from the beginning; for the zeal and enthusiasm which he directed toward the end of getting it said and heard, was in itself a misunderstanding. The matter of prime importance was, of course, that he should be understood; the inwardness of the understanding would consist precisely in each individual coming to understand it by himself.[2]

We shall trace the implications of this philosophy of existence for social thought in the chapters to follow.

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[1] *Ibid.*, 71.

[2] *Ibid.*

CHAPTER III

THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF SØREN KIERKEGAARD

The purpose of this chapter is to survey and analyze the social philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard. We shall divide this survey and analysis into two parts: actual society and ideal society. Under the topic of actual society we shall consider the family, the press, the state, and the church. Under the topic of ideal society, we shall consider Kierkegaard's conception of the authentic individual for the purpose of discovering what relation, if any, obtains between the individual and the ideal church.

Kierkegaard characterized society as he experienced it existentially. That is to say, he did not derive the concept of society from any purely definitional considerations but rather analyzed society as it impinged upon him, as it influenced him as an individual. Thus Kierkegaard characterized society by two terms. Actual society is characterized as "the crowd."[1] Ideal society is characterized as "Christianity" as opposed to "Christendom."[2]

The uniting concept in Kierkegaard's critique of actual society is the basic distinction between what is unique and what is non-unique, or countable. The unique is the individual, the subject, as well as

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[1] Kierkegaard, The Point of View, 47.

[2] Kierkegaard, The Last Years, 333, and The Point of View, 77.

God, the Absolute, and in the ideal sense, the church. What is non-unique is the countable, what can be numbered because the individual differences can be ignored without essentially altering the character of what is counted. Numbers of people constitute the masses, and in Kierkegaard's conception hinder the truth by making the truth appear to be countable rather than subjective, or unique. People mistakenly assume that when large numbers of people believe something then it must be true, instead of grasping the point that the truth has no relation to its popular acceptance or rejection. When men unite to serve an idea, Kierkegaard maintains, that act of uniting does not add to the idea but rather detracts from it.

We shall examine these ideas more closely in the pages to follow, where we shall provide the necessary documentation. At this point it is only necessary to stress the fact that this distinction between the unique, the individual, and the non-unique, the number, is basic to the understanding of Kierkegaard's critique of actual society. The sections to follow on the family, the press, and the state, can be seen as instances of this basic attitude. Actual society cannot be conceived without number, according to Kierkegaard. As such, it can never become ideal, unique, or spiritual.

1. Actual Society

As Kierkegaard reflected upon the nature of society, he came to the conclusion that secular social entities, as opposed to sacred social entities, were the ethical expression of natural datum. We shall see the basis for Kierkegaard's thought in this regard as we examine his reflections on the family, which he seemed to consider the most elementary unit of actual society.

i. Kierkegaard's Reflections on the Family.--According to Kierkegaard the family and the marriage contract which forms the family unit are rooted in the animal part of the nature of man and are thus opposed to the spiritual. Marriage, he said, was the "ethical expression for the propagation of the species."[1] Kierkegaard himself was personally unable to "realize the universal" by marrying his fiancée, Regina Olsen.

It is possible to receive two quite opposite impressions of Kierkegaard's valuation of the family by reading his varied observations on the subject. These two impressions depend upon whether Kierkegaard was viewing the family from the ethical or the religious standpoint. The unconditional sanction of marriage appears to be indicated by such passages as "The Aesthetic Validity of Marriage" in Either/Or, and "Various Observations about Marriage, in Reply to Objections, by a Married Man" from Stages on Life's Way.[2] On the other hand, what appears to the reader to be a bitter rejection of marriage appears in the later passages of his Journal, as we shall see shortly.

Kierkegaard does reject the validity of marriage considered from a religious viewpoint, although he does consider marriage to be valid on the lesser level of ethical consideration. As Kierkegaard had contrasted the third level of existence with the second, he did not intend to deny all validity to the second, or ethical, sphere, but only to hold that its principles are not determinative in the higher sphere of existence. Marriage is the ethical expression of natural necessity, and can be rejected in the sense that in the religious sphere, natural necessity is itself rejected in favor of the free choice of the individual who understands authentic existence to be independent of natural causes or factors.

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[1] Kierkegaard, The Last Years, 71.

[2] Kierkegaard (Hilarius Bookbinder), Stages on Life's Way, 177.

Let us document the assertions we have made about Kierkegaard's thoughts on these matters. The positive estimate, on the ethical level, of marriage and the family can be seen from the following passage:

> The first thing then I have to do is to orient myself and more especially to orient you, in the definitions of what a marriage is. What properly constitutes it, gives it its substantial content, is obviously love. If this is lacking, the life in common is either satisfaction of a carnal lust, or it is an association, a partnership, for the attainment of one aim or another. But love has in it precisely the characteristic of eternity, whether it be the superstitious, romantic chivalrous love, or the deeper moral and religious love which is filled with a mighty and lively assurance.[1]

Again, although in the quite different context of the direct works, Kierkegaard develops a similar theme. One of his many edifying discourses is entitled "Love Conquers All" and is subtitled "On the Occasion of a Wedding." He writes

> love must here become duty....Eternity is not here through with time, but the pact of love is eternity's beginning in time. The eternal resolution and the duty must forever remain with the wedded pair throughout time in the union of their love.[2]

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[1] Kierkegaard (Victor Eremita), Either/Or, 33.

[2] Søren Kierkegaard, Edifying Discourses, trans. David and Lillian Swenson, ed. Paul L. Homer (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), 177, 178.

When Kierkegaard had broken his engagement to Regina Olsen, he had done so because of his belief that he was unfit for one of the necessary demands of marriage, namely the honesty and openness which marriage required. It was by means of that experience that he had come to feel that he was "the exception."[1] Specifically, according to Kierkegaard's formulation, it was by means of

> the dialectical struggle by which the exception breaks away from the universal, in the prolix and very complicated procedure by which the exception fights his way through and asserts himself as a justified exception--for the unjustified exception is recognizable precisely by the fact that he wants to get around the universal.[2]

We have noted that a positive valuation of the family depended, for Kierkegaard, upon viewing the family from an ethical frame of reference. Now if we pass from the ethical by means of some sort of justified individual choice, as did Kierkegaard in the sequence reviewed above, we find the negative valuation of the family.

> Everyone in whom the animal disposition is preponderant always has this faith that he is more when he is with his family, and what families are in a small way millions are in a big way, they are families....In relation to the idea a single man is more than a man with a family. But this predominance of the category of the race is firmly embedded in us.[3]

It is to be noted that Kierkegaard applied his notion of number, which we shall see as increasingly significant for his social theory, to the family as he saw it constituted.

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[1] Søren Kierkegaard (Constantine Constantius), Repetition, An Essay in Experimental Psychology, trans. Walter Lowrie (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 132.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Kierkegaard, The Last Years, 166.

From the religious point of view, marriage was connected with the animal part of man's nature. Thus:

> Christianity says, Do not marry, this is well-pleasing to God, and is a matter of course if you are really a Christian.
>
> Mankind answers, But if we all do this, the race will perish.
>
> And that the race might perish is of course regarded by the race as the greatest misfortune.
>
> So the consequence is not merely that men do not get married, no, they have obtained one reason more for marrying--that they may prevent the terrible thing (which is so near at hand!)--the terrible thing (which almost everyone is busy preventing!), that the race might perish.
>
> This is one reason more for marrying.[1]

From this ironic passage it can be seen that Kierkegaard views the family as constituted by biological and physical factors. As such, the family is unnecessary from an ideal point of view. It is unnecessary that the race of man be preserved from extinction.

Continuing, we see that marriage and the family, viewed by those principles appropriate to the religious sphere, begin to be viewed much less romantically than was the case in the ethical sphere. For example:

> God pity what takes place in family life! What brutality and what egoism are hidden there. It is unfortunately only too certain that the parents usually need more upbringing than the children.[2]

Kierkegaard increasingly came to contrast the natural with the ideal. The more sharply this contrast was drawn, the worse did actual social life appear to Kierkegaard's eyes:

> The ideal means hatred of man. What man naturally loves is finitude. To face him with the ideal is the most dreadful torture. Certainly, when the ideal is produced in the most

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[1] Ibid., 265.

[2] Ibid., 278.

> exalted poetic fashion, like an enchanting vision of the imagination, he accepts this pleasure.
>
> But when the ideal is produced as the ethico-religious demand, it is the most dreadful torture for man....
>
> The real fury against the ideal comes from family life, from the lioness....
>
> All who have truly learned about ideals have also praised celibacy. To marry means to make the relation to the ideal so difficult for oneself that it normally is equivalent to abandoning the ideal.
>
> To be married in the way Socrates was is something different from what one usually understands by marriage. Socrates regarded marriage as a hindrance, and that was why he married, and why he was happy with Zanthippe, or thought he was--namely, because of the difficulty.[1]

Kierkegaard appears to believe that people marry for two kinds of reasons. First they marry to satisfy their natural instinct for the propagation of the species. The second reason for marrying, as we shall see directly, is the desire to attain social immortality by means of the perpetuation of the family name. This latter reason Kierkegaard calls specifically Jewish, that is, this-worldly. He associates Grundtvig with this theory, believing that what Grundtvig called Christianity was really Judaism, and that the satisfactions Grundtvig thought appropriate to religious observance were temporal rather than eternal.[2]

> The propagation of the species (as both Plato and Aristotle expressly say) was, both in paganism and Judaism, a substitute for immortality.[3]

Kierkegaard's attitude toward women, as was the case with Nietzsche, contained decidedly negative elements.[4] Speaking from what he considers correct religious principles, Kierkegaard says:

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[1] Ibid., 308, 309. [2] Ibid., 71.

[3] Ibid., 266. [4] Ibid., 68, 69, 96, 109, 220, 284.

> In the New Testament it is the man who is intended; religion is related to the man; the woman participates in religion in a secondary way, through the man. She herself cannot endure a dialectic.[1]

Kierkegaard's conception is that nature determined the capacity for response to spiritual truth, although this does not affect the salvation of women as such.

> This is where women excel, when men enter into a serious relation with them. First and foremost men are humiliated by women. One may generally assume that every married man is in his inner heart crestfallen, for he feels that he has been made a fool of, when all that high-flown stuff of the days of falling in love, all that about Juliana being the very incarnation of beauty and grace, and the possession of her being the summit of blessedness, ends in a false alarm. That is the first blow the man receives. And this is no insignificant matter, for a man cannot easily endure having to confess to himself that he has been fooled, and that both he and Juliana (who for her part has had the same experience) agree to keep a stiff upper lip and to conceal the truth from the rest of the world; they agree to lie, that marriage is true happiness and they in particular are happy.
>
> When all this is in order, then Providence knows that this fellow is easy to govern; he is one of those who makes no conquests in the world of ideas. For such continued lying brings the man into the utmost degradation. It is another matter with the woman, for she is a born liar, a virtuoso who is never really happy unless there is a little lying; one can be a priori sure that wherever a woman is concerned, there will also be a little lying. In a sense she is innocent in the matter, she can do nothing about it. One can never think of being angry about it: on the contrary one can regard it as in the highest degree an amiable quality, she is in the power of a natural destiny, which with the utmost cunning makes use of her in order to weaken the man.[2]

The final element of significance for Kierkegaard's estimate of the family is the element of egoism. Egoism, he states, is involved in all forms of satisfaction on a finite basis, including the family, the state,[1] woman,[2] and the sexual relation.

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[1] Ibid., 285.

[2] Ibid., 68, 69.

> Human egoism is concentrated in the sexual relation, the propagation of the species, the giving of life.
>
> According to the teaching of Christianity God desires only one thing from us men--to be loved. But to love God a man must give up all egoism, and first and foremost the potentiated egoism of the propagation of the species, the giving of life.
>
> Of course God knows only too well that the sexual is the centre of human egoism; thus it was here that he directed his aim . . . . God wishes to have celibacy because he wishes to be loved.[3]

From the preceding exposition it can be seen that, while Kierkegaard recognizes the family as a significant part of actual society, he rejects the thought that the family has any place in ideal existence. The family is acknowledged to be part of the universal, but in Kierkegaard's conception the universal is inferior to the ideal. Thus the ideal was superior to marriage. In the religious stage of existence the ideal is inimical to marriage. This preference which Kierkegaard expressed for celibacy is closer to the ecclesiastical recommendations of the medieval church than to the reformation recommendation of marriage. Hence Kierkegaard declared that Martin Luther was wrong in leaving the monastery and in saying that it was not possible to live chastely outside marriage:

> Christianity is not in the least interested in such matters, it is too exalted to be imposed upon in this way . . . . And in any case, dear Luther, you should have made it clear that what you had to say was not a matter of Christian progress, but of a reduction in the price.[4]

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[1] _Ibid_., 241. [2] _Ibid_., 69.

[3] _Ibid_., 266, 267 [4] _Ibid_., 300.

One important consideration underlying Kierkegaard's rejection of the family as an element of ideal society appears to be his conception of the universal. For Kierkegaard the universal carried the implication of the striving quality of the classical eros. By placing the universal in his ethical sphere, rather than in his aesthetic sphere, Kierkegaard demonstrated his high regard for the value of classical thought. The striving for the universal was on the way toward the ideal goal, or telos. It was in the right direction.

Yet the universal, eros, also carried with it what Kierkegaard believed to be the sexual constitution of the human enterprise as connected with the natural order. Believing that this latter implication was a necessary part of the universal as such, Kierkegaard turned to another conception, the ideal, which he considered able to express pure perfection in an adequate manner. This was the ideal, by which Kierkegaard meant "the Individual." The Individual stood in opposition to the human enterprise as a natural expression of the created order of the world as it was. The Individual necessarily represented, among other things, the denial of the validity of sex, the isolation of the individual from a potential mate, with the consequent negation of the human race as a species.

The ideal was related to the intellectual in the particular sense that the intellectual informed the individual about the authentic philosophy of existence so that the individual would be in a position to exercise his will and choose a unique relationship with the absolute. This would be "good" infinity--as opposed to "bad" infinity as seen in the aesthetic stage when one is deeply impressed by a poetic appeal for the attainment of infinity. The character of the ideal will become apparent in an adequate way only when we consider the content of that ideal under the topic of Kierkegaard's conception of Christianity as opposed to "Christendom."

ii. Kierkegaard's Reflections on the Press.--The second topic for our consideration under Kierkegaard's description of actual society is the press. The press was important to his reflections upon actual society because the press was so prominent in the daily life of the capital city of Copenhagen. In particular the scandal tabloid named The Corsair influenced Kierkegaard in an unpleasant way.[1]

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[1] The Corsair was a Copenhagen scandal sheet which had been founded as a successful money-making venture for its publisher, Goldschmidt. The nominal editors were front-men hired to take the legal punishment in case of libel or injury judgments. The editorial policy of the paper was to level all distinctions by the device of attacking the upper classes and thus exposing their hidden weaknesses. By such means the publisher intended to demonstrate that the so-called upper classes were not in any way essentially superior to the lower classes. The leading citizens of Copenhagen deplored the paper and its policies to one another, but they also read it secretly and were afraid to protest publicly lest they become the personal subjects of an attack by the paper.

The Corsair initially had no quarrel with Kierkegaard. In fact, it had on several occasions praised his pseudonymous works. Nevertheless, Kierkegaard felt that the paper was a pernicious influence upon society. He decided to attack it as a good deed. His attack was most damaging. He exposed the connection between the respectable P. L. Møller and The Corsair, thus in one stroke weakening the paper's staff and ending Møller's hopes for the promotion to the chair of aesthetics at the university.

Kierkegaard's theory of the press was that

> The daily press is properly calculated to make personality impossible. For it has the effect of an immense abstraction, the generation, which has infinite power over the single person. It is a means which was unknown in former times. For in former times the battle between personality and the abstract was not so immensely disproportionate as now, when an individual who is impersonal and scoundrelly can use this fearful weapon against the single person.[1]

It is important to note that Kierkegaard was referring to "an individual who is impersonal," who, in other words, was at a low level in the spheres of existence, who was content with the quality of existence more appropriate to inanimate objects than to human spirit. The press, in the hands of such an individual, thus becomes the tool whereby an objective and abstract philosophy of life is spread over the widest possible area. Thus the press exerts its

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When Kierkegaard then dared The Corsair to attack him, the management agreed with some reluctance. For six months in nearly every issue the paper ridiculed and caricatured Kierkegaard. To the great delight of the populace it made constant reference to Kierkegaard's thin legs and unequal trousers.

While such matters may seem comparatively trivial, Copenhagen was rather provincial at the time, and in atmosphere like a small town. For this reason the cartoons in The Corsair succeeded in significantly altering people's behavior toward Kierkegaard. Whereas he had formerly enjoyed friendly conversation with the common people on the streets, the newspaper attack ended all such conversations. The common people were encouraged by the paper to consider him half crazy. Children began chasing him when he went on walks. Gangs of young men interfered with his rides in the countryside. From such personal experience Kierkegaard concluded that the press possessed unusually great power to corrupt the public. Cf. Lowrie, II, 347ff.

[1] Kierkegaard, The Last Years, 35.

power to distort normal social relationships. Individuals are prevented from relating to each other as individuals because of the press. The press erects itself as a barrier and mediates between individuals. Common people begin to trust the opinions of the press over their own immediate first-hand relationship with another person.

The newspapers, in Kierkegaard's view, are to blame for laboring "at degrading men to be mere copies."[1] Kierkegaard goes on to explicitly connect his theory of the press with the view that this aspect of actual society is the expression of natural datum. He states that it is the proper characteristic of animals to be mere copies. Man, on the other hand, is the only animal where "every copy . . . is more than the species, is an individuality made to be spirit."[2]

Whereas Christianity works on the principle that "the first condition of salvation is to become a single person,"[3] the press works on the principle that the publication of information for the greatest possible audience is a good. The press is oriented toward the masses, while authentic existence is oriented toward the individual. The trouble with the press, Kierkegaard says, is that its powers are "disproportionate."[4]

It is necessary to emphasize the point that Kierkegaard's theory of the press is not that the press is a good feature of society except on those occasions when it prints lies. His theory is that the daily papers are evil as such. "The power of diffusion" in itself is evil.[1] Even when reports are printed that are entirely true they bring an "immense celebrity" that few are able to bear without losing either their minds or their lives. "Diffusion is in and for itself the evil."[2]

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[1] Ibid., 228.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., 94.

[4] Ibid., 97.

The point is that diffusion, like objectivity, has the fault of providing the appearance of knowledge where there is none. Diffusion provides the facade of true existence on a mass scale, while the only possible authentic existence is on the scale of the individual who subjectively appropriates the truth as truth for him.

The concept which Kierkegaard introduces as the characteristic of actual as opposed to ideal society is the concept of number. Kierkegaard is distinguishing between the unique--which is not numerable, as a human being--and the numerable--which are alike, and thus susceptible to counting. The character of the masses is number. Number is the opposite of the individual.

> The public is that which is the emptiest of ideas, indeed it is the very opposite of the idea. For the public is numbers. . . . For the publicist the struggle of ideas in public life is neither more or less than an affair of the Stock Exchange. As in the quotations of stocks and shares, so what concerns him is merely to know what opinion has the numbers on its side. He believes that numbers are ideas--and this is the very culmination of absence of ideas.[3]

In such a way Kierkegaard insisted upon the discontinuity between number and reality. Number and the universal were less real, according to Kierkegaard, than the individual and the particular related to the absolute. Thus quantity is irrelevant where quality and uniqueness are concerned.[1]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

> The reliability of numbers is of course a fraud, they are unreliable; and yet this is what is offered you in the world, calculated to fool you, so that you become part of the numbers.
>
> There are millions of Mohammedans--but look more closely and you will see that they are Mohammedans of this type: "Yes, I am like the rest"--Mohammedans in the sense that if they had been born in Christendom they would be Christians. There are millions of Christians--what a reliable fact! Yes, it is so reliable that if the same men had been born in those other lands they would be Mohammedans.
>
> If there is a certain truth in the saying that man has been given words in order to conceal his thoughts (or as I should say in order to conceal the fact that he has no thoughts), the truth, namely that he was not given them for this purpose, but that is how he uses them, something similar can be truly said about numbers. Numbers are used in order to conceal the emptiness of existence, they put you in a state of exaltation, like opium, and so you are tranquillized by the immense reliability of numbers running into millions. Yet in truth millions are just as unreliable, every bit as unreliable, as one. But one man does not have a stupifying effect, as millions do: with millions we can be sure, everything is reliable![2]

Therefore, it can be seen, Kierkegaard believed that the ideal is unequal to numbers of men, although actual society, which has its basis in the animal background of man, is indeed characterized by numbers. The nature of man is such that "man is a synthesis. He is both an animal creation and the possibility of spirit."[3] Spirit is introduced when man feels "the impulse to another kind of certainty than that of numbers."[4]

From the above it would appear that Kierkegaard would offer as a refutation of the validity of Utilitarianism as a social ethic the argument that the greatest number is not a valid criterion for social good. In turn it could be asked of Kierkegaard whether his rejection of number would not make any social theory whatever impossible on such premisses. The key point would be whether or not number is applicable in some sense to society as such, including society in the ideal sense. A further consideration of such a question would be appropriate later in the exposition and critique. At the moment it must suffice to note that the ideal, in Kierkegaard's thought, is the individual as particularly related to the absolute. In such an ideal, Kierkegaard maintained, comparative considerations of a quantitative nature based on number are irrelevant. The only significant consideration would be the quality of the relationship.

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[1] *Ibid.*, 234.

[2] *Ibid.*, 163.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*

When men unite in order to better serve an idea, they do not realize that the act of uniting subtracts from the idea rather than adding to it. This is the central and basic point in Kierkegaard's formulation. That is, where the social instinct of man is operative, spirit abandons the enterprise, because "sociality is part of the definition of man as an animal."[1]

Actual society, according to Kierkegaard, cannot be conceived without number. He connects the numerical or the quantitative with every aspect of actual society which he treats, including religion, the police, and attempted revolutionary activity. Yet Kierkegaard was insisting that number and therefore society as it is are distractions from universal or ideal truth. In other words, the ideal is apprehended not by the intellect but by the will. The will, it will be recalled from the preceding chapter, has as its proper locus the individual acting in subjective inwardness. That is to say, objective truth, the sort of truth which would encompass numerical considerations, is irrelevant to the personal appropriation of truth, that subjectivity which alone can provide assent and will in personal existence.

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[1] Ibid., 170.

Therefore, Kierkegaard considers the press to be both a prominent and undesirable element in society because of its objective power for diffusing information widely. Such a diffusion is degrading to man, distracting as it does from the necessity for each man to become an authentic individual.

iii. Kierkegaard's Theory of the State.--As with the family, Kierkegaard considers the state to be the ethical expression of natural datum. The state has its validity on the ethical sphere of existence, but it remains subordinate to the ideal, the religious sphere of existence. In this sense, Kierkegaard formulates a negative theory of the state. The state exists to restrain crime rather than to promote virtue. It exercises authority within its proper sphere, the ethical. Let us proceed to document Kierkegaard's theory of the state.

According to Kierkegaard, egoism characterizes the state just as it did the family:

> The state is human egoism in its great proportions and dimensions--so far is Plato from being right when he says that in order to know virtues we should study them in the state.
>
> The state is human egoism in its great dimensions, combined with such appropriateness and ingenuity that the egoism of single persons interacts in mutual correction. To this extent the state is certainly a defence against egoism--by means of displaying a higher egoism which dominates all the individual egoisms, so that they may egoistically realize that from an egoistic point of view it is cleverest to live in the state.
>
> As one speaks of the infinitesimal calculus, so one can say that the state is the calculus of egoism, yet always in such a way that it is egoistically clear that the cleverest thing is to enter into and participate in this higher egoism. But this is quite different from a moral relinquishment of egoism.
>
> The state does not reach further than this; so that to be bettered by living in the state is just as dubious a matter as being bettered in a house of correction.[1]

It is interesting to note Kierkegaard's agreement at one point with the utilitarian analysis of society. Namely, "the egoism of single persons interacts in mutual correction." However, Kierkegaard does not admit as a conclusion to this circumstance that through such an interaction true virtue may be learned.

The political events of the time were turbulent. Europe in 1830 and 1848 was the scene of widespread political agitation and revolution. Kierkegaard held himself aloof from such events, taking no part in them because he believed them to be unimportant. Religion, in his opinion, was the only matter of ultimate concern. Political matters were secondary and not worth such attention. They were distractions.

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[1] *Ibid*., 241.

> In these times politics is everything. Between this and the religious view the difference is heaven-wide (toto caelo), as also the point of departure and the ultimate aim differ from it toto caelo, since politics begins on earth and remains on earth, whereas religion, deriving its beginning from above, seeks to explain and transfigure and thereby exalt the earthly to heaven.[1]

It will be observed from this passage that Kierkegaard has laid the same sort of theoretical basis for the rejection of political life as he laid for the rejection of family life before. Yet it is the case that he did not either publish or prepare any polemic against the state as might have been expected. The reason for this may prove to be that, despite his similar relegation of politics as well as the family and the church to a lower realm of existence than the ideal, he nevertheless felt that there was some factor within political life as constituted in the Crown which would be continued in ideal society. This factor may well prove to be the element of authority.

Kierkegaard states that the essential difference between religion and politics can be seen by reference to the category of "reduplication":

> Everything depends upon "how" a thing is put into practice, on the reduplication of the proposition in working form in relation to the proposition: of that I am evermore certain.
>
> In fact one may say, in two words, that the difference between politics and religion is that no politics wishes to have anything to do with reduplication, for that it is too busy, too earthly, too worldly.
>
> For reduplication is the longest operation of all, is really that of eternity.[2]

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[1] Kierkegaard, The Point of View, 107.

[2] Kierkegaard, The Journals of Kierkegaard, 204.

Reduplication, or repetition (Gentagelse), is Kierkegaard's notion of fulfillment. It represents the divine fulfillment of promises in the face of apparent defeat by earthly forces. For example, it represents the restoration of family to a disciple who has renounced and lost his own family because of his adherence to the faith. "Repetition is a religious category . . . . It is a movement in virtue of the absurd . . . . Eternity is the true repetition."[1] Kierkegaard called repetition "a new category that will be discovered."[2]

As this category is applied to politics, Kierkegaard is saying that politicians appear to be too impatient to grant the proper attention to such repetition. Politicians are too concerned with protecting society as it is to give serious thought to sacrifice, either the sacrifice of their own prestige or of the position of their country. Having rejected sacrifice and contenting themselves with what they have and what they judge to be attainable, they therefore fail to perceive the transitory and subsidiary character of all political accomplishments. If politicians were wise, in Kierkegaard's opinion, they would prefer to become martyrs. As they are unwilling to give up everything, they keep what they have, which, in the strict sense, is nothing.

> Politics consists of never venturing more than is possible at any moment, never going beyond what is humanly probable.
>
> In Christianity, if there is no venturing farther out, beyond what is probable, God is absolutely not with us; without of course its following that he is with us wherever we venture farther out than what is probable.[3]

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[1] Lowrie, II, 634.

[2] Himmelstrup, Samlede Vaerker, XX, Terminologisk Ordbog, 78.

[3] Kierkegaard, The Last Years, 162.

Kierkegaard was regarded as a political conservative by his contemporaries. It is correct to state that he was a conservative in his support of the existing absolute monarchy, but it is incorrect to think that conservatism pervaded all his social thought. His polemic against the established church, as we shall see in the following section, was radical, and his attack upon the family was the opposite of what would ordinarily be termed conservative. Kierkegaard's political conservatism was the result of the subordinate sphere to which he assigned politics. The ideal, which might otherwise provide the basis for a radical critique of existing social practice, was the individual oriented toward the absolute, an absolute whose quality of arbitrary authority requiring a response by the will was continuous in an analogical sense with the authority exercised by an absolute sovereign. Thus the religious sphere of existence does not provide information of any kind for the better ordering of politics, but rather is opposed to politics as such. That is,

> What may be explained as a result of something ethical in a man may also find its explanation in a paramount love of pleasure: the desire to retain the old, the established.
>
> It is the very man whose one intention is to enjoy life, and make a brilliant worldly career, to whom it may be of the greatest importance that there should be no disturbances where religion is concerned. Once the "spirit" begins to move, life becomes unsettled, and one cannot concentrate properly on making a career. That is why it is so important that it should be kept exactly as it is, that religion should be taken over exactly as it was transmitted by the last generation, with at the most a few little modifications. For epicureanism always retains something of the old epicurean saying: nil beatum nisi Quietam.[1]

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[1] Kierkegaard, The Journals of Kierkegaard, 218.

Thus it can be seen that, in Kierkegaard's view, the practice of accommodation to the established order for the sake of reward and preferment was wrong. The proper study for the individual ought to be religion, through which the unsettling aspects of the "spirit" would lead to the possibility of authentic existence.

Kierkegaard objected to Hegel's doctrine of the state:

> That from a Christian standpoint, as Hegel taught, the state has a moral significance, that true virtue should be manifested only in the state (which I too repeated childishly after him in my thesis) that the aim of the state is to ennoble men, and so on, of course is all nonsense.
>
> The state is rather an evil than a good, rather a necessary and in a sense a useful and expedient evil than a good.[1]

Kierkegaard's negative valuation of the state is the consequence of his high valuation of individual choice. Individual choice is superior to reason, in his view, because it takes up at the point where reason must take off, that is, at the encounter with the paradox. It will be noted that Kierkegaard's notion of choice is of arbitrary choice. Therefore the state cannot possibly train or educate for the wise choice in Kierkegaard's sense. The state is limited by its own egoism. Consequently,

> this must certainly be called a very disturbing state of affairs, considered from the standpoint of moral education and development.
>
> So the state is constantly subject to the sophistical problem which the Greek sophists were also so busied with, that injustice in a grand style is justice, that concepts are inverted or changed in a quite peculiar manner, that what matters is to have things big. Furthermore, the state is constantly subject to the scepticism that supposes that the concept is determined by numbers, that the truth lies in the greatest number.
>
> And to claim that the state is calculated to develop men morally, and is the right medium for virtue, the place

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[1] Kierkegaard, The Last Years, 241.

> where a man can become virtuous! This place is in truth just as peculiar for this purpose as would be the claim that the best place for a watch maker . . . to work is on board ship in a heavy sea.[1]

Thus the state cannot aid the individual's moral or spiritual development.

Therefore, according to Kierkegaard, it is a mistake to suppose that the state can be fundamentally reformed. In all political reform all that happens is that one form of order is substituted for another while the nature of the state as such remains unaltered. No real improvement results from the substitution of one form of egoism for another. On such grounds, Kierkegaard thinks, the Christian ought not to press for social reform, for:

> Christianity is therefore not at all of the opinion that the Christian should remain in society in order to be morally ennobled: no, it forewarns him that it will mean suffering.[2]

One might say that egoism does not become a virtue simply because it has been authorized by the state. The mask of legality and respectability produces a situation of dishonesty which makes the situation worse. Thus,

> a swindler who, as is said, fleeces another man is perhaps not as corrupt as one who knows precisely how much one can dare to swindle and still retain respect and esteem as a most respectable man.[3]

Having seen the character of the state as portrayed by Kierkegaard, let us now examine his view of the actual governing of the state. The "highest goods" of the state are two: money and the security of property.[4] In addition, Kierkegaard says, those tendencies which lead to "disorder and bad habits" in the state also ought to be punished, though not as severly as crimes against money and property. From the state's point of view, individuals who "stubbornly insist that they are the true Christians in opposition to the rest" are guilty of punishable egoism. Private individuals--again from the state's viewpoint--ought not to be preoccupied in particularly personal matters. When the state has taken over it has engaged to provide tranquility and efficiency and "a certain security."[2] This security is, of course, only temporal because "eternity, after all, is like another continent."[3]

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[1] *Ibid.*, 242. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*, 243.

Denmark at the time, as we have noted, was an absolute monarchy. The political agitation of the times was aimed at limiting the monarch's powers by constitutional and parliamentary means. Kierkegaard considered such agitation to be beside the point, secondary to other matters, among which was the art of governing. During one of his audiences with the king, Christian VIII, Kierkegaard related in 1849 what was his opinion of the qualities which the art of governing demanded of a chief executive:

> I have often pondered over what a king should be. In the first place he can perfectly well be ugly; then he ought to be deaf and blind, or at least pretend to be so, for that gets over many difficulties, a tactless or stupid remark which being addressed to a king has a certain importance is best put off by a: "I beg your pardon"--i.e., that the king has not heard it. Finally the king ought not to say much but have some expression or other which he can use on every occasion, and which is consequently meaningless. He laughed and said: a charming portrait of a king. So I said: "yes, it is true, one thing more: the king must take care to be ill every now and then, so as to arouse sympathy."[4]

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[1] Ibid.   [2] Ibid., 244.   [3] Ibid.

[4] Kierkegaard, The Journals of Kierkegaard, 157.

A significant theoretical consideration which Kierkegaard noted under the topic of the state is to distinguish between relative and absolute majesty. Kierkegaard defines "absolute majesty" as that state in which "everything is equally important and equally nothing."[1] In other words, there are no valid differences or distinctions to be made in the state of absolute majesty. Absolute majesty is God's majesty, and as a consequence, "Christians are the 'pages of absolute majesty.'"[2] No relative distinctions can have any significance at this level. Therefore, the only thing that "can interest him" is "obedience":

> But this view . . . of obedience does not really please us men. So we have got rid of it, and let ourselves pretend we can fool God with differences, as though something were more important, one important point. This is a discovery which works to the advantage of the more favoured, who imagine that they are nearer to God in virtue of the difference between man and man.[3]

In virtue of the concept of absolute majesty, Kierkegaard believed all differences of station within society to be man-made. They are no part of absolute and undifferentiated majesty. On the basis of this egalitarian aspect of Kierkegaard's social thought it could be expected that he might thereupon sanction either reform or revolution. That such was not the implication Kierkegaard drew at this point is due to his firm belief that politics was essentially on a lower level of existence from religion.

"Relative majesty," as opposed to absolute majesty, is characterized by differences:

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[1] Kierkegaard, The Last Years, 28.

[2] Ibid., 289.

[3] Ibid.

> There are always one or several points which interest him. There are differences. For him one thing is more important than another, one thing is significant and another is insignificant, and so on. But this is just what prevents him from reaching the infinite elevation, the real majesty which is interested only in obedience.[1]

The significance of this conception of relative majesty can be seen in the application Kierkegaard makes of it to temporal rule by kings. Politics is a secondary matter in that it is concerned only with relative majesty. Yet at the same time Kierkegaard treats the Crown with such deference because of its symbolic significance, in that at least by analogy it points to what Kierkegaard calls absolute majesty. The monarch is the symbol of God's absolute rule "There is a need of majesty in my soul, of a majesty I can never tire of worshipping."[2]

Kierkegaard did not advise a theocratic form of government because the religious principle was suffering, a fact which we ought to note well. The proper political goal, it will be recalled, was the protection of money and property, a matter quite at variance with the religious principle of suffering. A church state would be just as much a form of what Kierkegaard called "cheating" as was a state church, as we shall see in the following section. Thus:

> The really great effort of this kind is the Pope. His idea is to rule men with the help of eternity, for it is he, Peter of the keys, Peter of lies, who controls eternity.[3]

Kierkegaard's concluding word on this rejection of the appropriateness of the temporal power of the church was the ironic exclamation, "Wonderful!"

Now it is true, according to Kierkegaard, that the proper aim of the state is to preserve order. Therefore, whenever the state acts to punish an individual for being unruly with regard to some religious matter, the state is, in its own province, justified. However, at the same time, that same unruly subject is also justified on Christian grounds, for to be a Christian does not mean to be orderly and peaceful, but rather disturbed. The state is said to "cheat" when it pretends to promise to guarantee eternal blessedness on the same basis that it guaranteed temporary blessedness, namely orderliness.

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., 268. [3] Ibid., 344, 345.

When the state and the church are compared in ultimate terms, Kierkegaard states that the state is "much inferior"[1] to Christianity. Because of this, whenever the state seeks to regulate religion it is "a human invention, which abolishes eternity and replaces it with a bit of seriousness about the police."[2]

> If a man feels the need and the desire to hear about Christ's suffering and death, the state has no right to push itself in and say, "Good, that will cost you ten talers, and we shall fix it for you."[3]

We have seen that Kierkegaard would not entrust the rule of the state to clerics, whether the Pope or the Jesuits or the Bishops of the Church of Denmark. If such men would accept the title to rule, he believed, that would be evidence enough that they were enjoying the world too much. Thus they would have forsaken the essence of their religious calling which was a calling not to enjoyment but to suffering.

The great political danger in a "reflective age" was that natural government would be replaced by government on the basis of some abstract principle. Dogmatic government, he believed, would not be an improvement over legitimate monarchy.

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[1] *Ibid.*, 45. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*, 44.

Kierkegaard preferred absolute monarchy, as much for symbolic reasons as for political ones. However, this preference did not imply any sanction of evil kings. Kierkegaard was of the opinion that authority was properly centered in one man's hands, the one man who was the natural and legitimate heir to the throne. This was natural, organic government, and it was the best possible on the lower level of existence which was appropriate to the operation of politics.

Kierkegaard was facing the same problem of who should rule as Plato faced in the _Republic_. According to Plato the philosopher-king would rule unwillingly, preferring the study of reality to the unwelcome necessity of exercising political authority. According to Kierkegaard such a state of affairs would not be possible. The philosopher would cease to be a philosopher as soon as he took control of government. No one could be educated for such civic virtue. What is decisive is not the reason but the will.

iv. _Kierkegaard's Reflections on the Church_.--The actual church, as Kierkegaard saw it, was the object of his most sustained polemic. Kierkegaard attacked the church because he believed it to be false, pretending to be what it was not, the embodiment of the ideal. We shall see in the section to follow what Kierkegaard meant by the ideal. At this point we are concerned to document Kierkegaard's attack upon the actual church and to discover why he contented himself with simply attacking the established church rather than recommending its reform.

Kierkegaard's charge was that the established church had ceased practicing Christianity and was instead recommending epicureanism. Although it was quite proper for the state to offer peace and enjoyment on a temporal basis to its subjects, the church was supposed to be constituted on a higher basis. Kierkegaard commented that Bishop Mynster had been admired and extolled for preaching not repentance but peace: "he was self-indulgent: self-indulgently he loved 'peace,' the first requisite for enjoying life, according to the old saying of Epicurus."[2] This is an important point, for enjoyment, in Kierkegaard's formulations, is directly opposed to suffering, and suffering is the constituting factor in the religious sphere of existence.

It was because the actual church had neglected to believe in the decisive importance of suffering for the truly religious life that Kierkegaard began his polemic against the established church. In this attack he distinguished sharply between Christianity and "Christendom." It is true that "Christendom" is a belief rather than an institution, yet it was a belief in Kierkegaard's view which became the structuring element in a mode of existence which was below the ideal. "Christendom" was defined by him as the illusion that everyone is a Christian as a matter of course.[3]

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[1] Søren Kierkegaard, Attack Upon "Christendom" (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1956), "The Instant No. 2", trans. Walter Lowrie, 17.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., 107.

By way of background it may be useful to review some of the factors of the time. The target of Kierkegaard's polemic was the existing church, the religious establishment, det Bestaaende. His polemic startled his contemporaries because throughout his life he had been known as a political and religious conservative. The estimate of Kierkegaard was that he was "blamed for taking no part in the stirring political events which agitated his country,"[1] in contrast to Grundtvig who was constantly involved in the politics of the day by agitating for legislative reforms.

Kierkegaard had not openly attacked the establishment so long as Bishop Mynster was alive because "out of filial piety towards a deceased father I honored the forged check instead of protesting it."[2]

After Bishop Mynster died, on the thirtieth of January, 1854,[3] Professor Martensen delivered a flowery eulogy in his capacity as court preacher at the Castle Church of Christiansborg. He praised the departed bishop with these words:

> Follow in the faith of the true witness! The man whose precious memory fills our hearts directs our thoughts to the whole chain of witnesses to the truth, a chain that extends from the days of the apostles down to our own day . . . . In this holy chain of witnesses our departed teacher was a link, serving to the glory of our God and Father. How he exercised among us his witness of faith in demonstrations of the Spirit and of power.[4]

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[1] Lowrie, II, 365.

[2] Kierkegaard, Attack Upon "Christendom", 12.

[3] Ibid., 295.

[4] Martensen, quoted in Hermann Diem, Kierkegaard: An Introduction (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1966), trans. David Green, 103.

Kierkegaard rejected the truth of this eulogy. The eulogy was false because Mynster had not been a genuine witness to the truth. This reaction is important to us not only because it was the occasion of Kierkegaard's inception of his attack upon the established church, but also because it affords us a way of understanding the basis for Kierkegaard's harsh judgment against the existing church.

A genuine "witness to the truth" (Sandhedsvidner), in Kierkegaard's meaning of the term, is an individual who acts in accordance with the religious sphere of existence. Specifically, the description of such a witness to the truth contains the three elements of a lack of enjoyment, poverty, and persecution with the possibility of martyrdom.

> A witness to the truth is a man whose life from first to last is unacquainted with everything which is called enjoyment . . . . A witness to the truth is a man who in poverty witnesses to the truth, one of the genuine witnesses to the truth, is a man who is scourged, maltreated, dragged from one prison to the other, and then at last--the last promotion, whereby he is admitted into the first class as defined by the Christian protocol . . . .--crucified, or beheaded, or burnt, or roasted on a gridiron, his lifeless body thrown by the executioner in an out-of-the-way place.[1]

Martensen objected that Kierkegaard had evidently confused "witness to the truth" with "blood-witness."[2] Martyrdom, said Martensen, was surely not the only way to be a genuine witness to the truth. He had not ever intended to suggest in his eulogy that Bishop Mynster had been a martyr when he obviously had not.

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[1] Kierkegaard, Attack Upon "Christendom", 7.

[2] Ibid., 10.

However, Martensen's criticism was not accurate. Kierkegaard had carefully distinguished between different degrees of witnesses to the truth, or "classes according to the Christian protocol."[1] Kierkegaard's key distinction between a false witness and a true witness was

> between preaching Christianity in such a way that the preacher is "a government official, a man of rank, and his preaching his own glittering career, rich in enjoyment," and on the other hand a "suffering witness to the truth."[2]

Kierkegaard correctly pointed out that suffering can be suffering without necessarily being suffering unto death. The key point in his criticism of Mynster's type of religion had been that Mynster had enjoyed life too much, that Mynster had derived material benefit from the spiritual suffering of the true witnesses to the truth, that he had traded on their lives and sufferings with a certain refined kind of cynicism. The martyrs were always useful for some dramatic point in one of Mynster's polished addresses. As Kierkegaard summarized the case, Myster

> had also the enjoyment of declaiming in quiet hours on Sundays and making up for it with worldly shrewdness on Mondays, giving the impression of being a man of character, a man of principle, who stands firm when everything vacillates, who does not fail when all are failing, etc., etc., whereas the truth is that he was worldly shrewd in a high degree, but weak, self-indulgent, and only great as a declaimer.[3]

Enjoyment and suffering are opposites, according to Kierkegaard, because time and eternity are opposites. Therefore, epicureanism and Christianity can never be combined. Mynster should never have been rewarded,

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., 9.

Kierkegaard believed, for having produced such a misunderstanding on so fundamental a question. Kierkegaard wrote, "My life's misfortune was that . . . I honored this forged check instead of protesting it."[1]

When Kierkegaard characterized his own definition of a witness to the truth it is important to note that he called that definition "domineering" (herskesyg) and "unsociable" (uselskabelig).[2] By the use of these rather unusual terms he meant to emphasize that the correct frame of reference for the Sandhedsvidner was within the religious sphere, that is, particular rather than universal or ethical, and individual rather than social in the sense of a crowd or large number of like-minded people. The individuality and particularity of the concept of a witness to the truth relates it to the central modes of thought which characterize Kierkegaard's philosophy of existence.

> The term "witness to the truth" stands in relation to the fact that Christianity is heterogeneous to the world, wherefore the "witness" must always be recognizable by heterogeneity to this world, by renunciation, by suffering, and this is the reason why such a mode of being (Vaeren) is so little capable of being something else at the same time.[3]

Worldly goods and advantages are, according to Kierkegaard, the precise opposite to suffering and renunciation which are alone the marks of the true witness to the truth. A short time later Kierkegaard generalized this portion of his attack to include all the pastors in the established church. They had all misunderstood their religious calling by misinterpreting the true meaning of a witness to the truth:

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Kierkegaard, Samlede Vaerker, XIX, Bladartikler, 16.

[3] Kierkegaard, Attack Upon Christendom", 11.

> When in his Word he speaks of preaching the Doctrine for nothing, we understand it to mean that preaching is naturally a livelihood, the most guaranteed way to bread and steady advancement; when in his Word he speaks of preaching the Word in poverty, we understand by that thousands a year in pay; when in his Word he talks about preaching the Word in degradation, we understand it as making a career, becoming your Excellency; and by dissimilarity to this world we understand as becoming a royal official, a man of consequence; by disgust for the help and use of worldly power we understand using and being secured by worldly power; by suffering for the Doctrine we understand using the police against others; and by renunciation of everything we understand getting everything, the finest refinements, which the heathen in vain has licked his fingers after--and at the same time we are witnesses to the truth.[1]

It was indeed the case at the time that the police powers of the state had been employed upon occasion to ensure the internal tranquility of the established church. On such occasions the civil authorities generally exhibited more good judgment than did the ecclesiastical authorities.

Since the Reformation it had been royal policy to maintain a single national church in the kingdom of Denmark. Foreign missionaries not of the Lutheran persuasion were excluded or deported from the land. This policy had been successful and doubtless was one cause of the country's internal tranquility. However, by the nineteenth century, although there had been no fragmentation of the Church of Denmark caused by outside missionaries there did seem to threaten such fragmentation from internal pressures.

As church authorities like Mynster saw the problem, the solution was simple. All that was needed was the reassertion of the authority and prerogatives of the church officials. However, such a solution required the use of police powers against citizens of the country, a matter which differed considerably from using the police to expel undesirable aliens. A complicating factor was that most of the church authorities were rationalists, theologically more skeptical about religious doctrine than were most parishoners, state officials included. Thus by summoning the police power to reassert the authority of the church, they were ironically requesting the repression of the common people who were orthodox and pietistic believers.

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[1] Kierkegaard, Samlede Vaerker, XIX, 26.

The two most celebrated incidents of the kind were the arrest of a group of laymen for holding unauthorized prayer meetings in their homes, and the arrest and forcible baptism of an infant. Søren Kierkegaard's brother, Peter,[1] was pastor of a church to which the police had brought a baby whose parents did not believe in infant baptism. The police, acting on orders from the highest authorities, ordered the pastor to baptize the child. Lacking the consent of the parents and shocked by the whole procedure, Peter refused. He was thereby liable to prosecution himself. The sordid affair dragged on for some time until at last the church officials, having been uncertainly supported by the state, dropped all charges.[2]

Grundtvig, as we shall observe in the chapters to follow, saw in these events matters calling for civil remedy. The solution as he saw it was the dissolution of the parish bond so that citizens could seek religious teaching wherever they wished, rather than being limited to their particular parish.[1] Kierkegaard, on the other hand, interpreted these events in a uniquely religious way.[2] That is, he did not think the fault lay, as Grundtvig believed, in the nation's laws, but in the faithlessness of the clergy. In other words, the best possible remedy for these events would not be realized by changing the laws to permit the individual believer to seek religious counsel from whomever he desired. That would be to mistakenly think that the objective propagation of the truth, unhindered by the ignorance of such parish priests as were ignorant of the truth, was all that was required. Kierkegaard always insisted that the key to truth was not objective propagation but subjective appropriation. It was true that the established church was wilfully refusing to acknowledge that its supreme loyalty should be toward God and suffering, not toward the world and enjoyment.

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[1] Lowrie, A Short Life of Kierkegaard, 48.

[2] Lindhardt, 82.

We have noted that Kierkegaard did not exaggerate in his reporting of the events of the day. His interpretation of those events is our concern, in light of the observation that Kierkegaard was "born polemical."[3] It is the adequacy of his critical concepts which concerns us. Within the context of his three ascending spheres of existence his critical and, to use his term, unsociable view of the existing church is consistent. Given the priority of the individual over the group, given the superiority of the ideal over the natural, given the desirability of Christianity over aesthetic and ethical man, given the particular over the universal, Kierkegaard's attack upon the established church is consistent with his thought as a whole.

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[1] Kierkegaard, Attack Upon 'Christendom', 184.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Villads Christensen, Søren Kierkegaards Motiver til Kirkekampen (København: Munksgaard, 1959), 9

Kierkegaard wrote that what he wanted of the existing church was "honesty":[1]

> Certainly it would have been most desirable (ønskeligste) if it had ended with Bishop Mynster saying to the national straightforwardly and as solemnly as possible that what he represented was not the New Testament Christianity but, if one would put it so, a pious tempering and mitigation of it, which in manifold ways was enveloped in illusion. This did not come to pass![2]

Kierkegaard's attack blamed the churches for treating God as if he were a fool.[3] "Official Christianity" was a barrier to true faith.[4] It was preposterous to believe, Kierkegaard wrote, that the state could protect the true faith.[5]

This last point should be emphasized. Kierkegaard was contending that the state church was wrong in principle due to the fact that the state cannot promote virtue. All the state can do, it will be recalled from the previous section on the state, is to restrain crime. The state is organized to provide temporal peace. This is its only proper sphere of action. The church, on the other hand, is oriented toward eternity. Thus, in Kierkegaard's view, true "New Testament" Christianity does not benefit from state protection.

However, this is not to say that Kierkegaard thought that once the church and state were separated that the purity of the church would follow. State protection of the church was a delusion, he believed. Yet there were other factors which were just as spiritually damaging to the proper character of the church. Basically, Kierkegaard's issue with the church of his day was that it was an institution which was forcing the conformity of the individual to the mass man. As Liselotte Richter observed, Kierkegaard was of the opinion that "the effect of the State Church is to level the individual and reduce him to a mass creature incapable of decision."[1] According to Kierkegaard's thought, no society of whatever size or character was ever a proper mediator between the individual and God. This is why actual society, including the institutional church, is assigned to the lower ethical level in the spheres of existence. When the individual chooses an absolute relation toward God, as he must to enter the religious stage, this without benefit or distraction of any society. The choice is subjective, inward. The only possible influence any objective social group might have is negative, as a distraction from the absolute inwardness of choice.

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[1] Kierkegaard, Attack Upon "Christendom", 39

[2] Ibid., 24. [3] Ibid., 26. [4] Ibid., 41. [5] Ibid., 43.

> We have what one might call a complete inventory of churches, bells, organs, benches, alms-boxes, foot-warmers, tables, hearses, etc. But when Christianity does not exist, the existence of this inventory, so far from being, Christianly considered, an advantage, is far rather a peril.[2]

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[1] Liselotte Richter, "Kierkegaard's Religio-Sociological Situation", A Kierkegaard Critique, ed. Howard A. Johnson and Niels Thulstrup (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), 61.

[2] Kierkegaard, Attack Upon "Christendom", 30.

These physical and objective features of actual church life are not said by Kierkegaard to be justified on the subsidiary grounds of practicality. Rather they are both unnecessary and detrimental to the true religious life. There is no continuity between the physical and economic level and the spiritual and religious level. The marked discontinuity between the two is the result of Kierkegaard's belief that the way to progress from the lower to the higher is by the act of the individual will.

Thus we have seen that of all the segments of actual society, the family, the press, the state, and the church, Kierkegaard directed his sharpest polemic against the church. The reason for this was that Kierkegaard believed that the actual church was the most abused since it pretended to be what it was not, that is, an embodiment of the ideal. The leaders of the church did not understand the nature of their calling, according to Kierkegaard, and practiced the enjoyment of life rather than the suffering which should characterize existence when man has become aware of his religious and spiritual aspirations. Following some remarks on the crowd, Kierkegaard's general characterization of actual society as such, we shall look more closely at the character of the ideal in Kierkegaard's thought.

v. Kierkegaard's Characterization of Actual Society as "The Crowd".--

We have noted earlier that Kierkegaard characterizes actual society as "the crowd."[1] This characterization sums up both his descriptive and his prescriptive views. Descriptively "the crowd" expresses the thought that society is external to the individual, composed as it is of numbers of people combined in different units, whether in the family or in the state or in the actual church. "The crowd" is connected with Kierkegaard's notion of number, quantity as opposed to quality. By "the crowd" Kierkegaard did not mean the uneducated masses, the ignorant peasants, or any such group of people inferior to whomever was making the comparison. Instead, he meant any group or combination above the individual. Any combination of persons for any cause whatever, whether good or bad, was "the crowd." The crowd was objective, whereas the individual was subjective.

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[1] Kierkegaard, The Point of View, 47.

This leads to the prescriptive element in Kierkegaard's characterization of actual society as "the crowd." The crowd was wrong in its very concept because it was opposed to the Individual, to the subjective, and thus to truth as appropriated by the existing Individual. The Individual was the goal or ideal of Kierkegaard's philosophy of existence, and any alternative way of life, such as the crowd, was less than the best possible. No idea is validated by the process of being believed by a large number of persons:

> Everything tends to abolish personality; but of course this takes place under the hypocritical protest that of course this means great progress, that this is a seriousness of a quite different kind from the days of the I and of personality.
>
> What hypocrisy! No, it is cowardice, and at the same time a whining desire always to be the many--and never daring to be alone, to be an I. But when there is a 'cause,' straightway there are many, so that one is above all safeguarded from

> the danger one fears most in our wretched demoralized times--the danger of being alone, a solitary I.[1]

Thus the many, the crowd, the numerical cannot contain or appropriate the truth because the truth or the "cause" which they serve in united form is objective. Only the Individual can appropriate the truth in subjectivity, the only truth that exists for an existing individual.

For example, in writing of the state as opposed to Christianity, Kierkegaard states:

> 'The State' is directly proportionate to number (*Tallet*), the numerical (*det Numeriske*); therefore when a state is decreasing, its numbers may gradually become so small that the state ceases to be (*er Ophørt*), the concept is snuffed out (*gaaet ud*).[2]

Thus the idea of the state constitutes the social entity, and Kierkegaard appears to be saying that when the numbers of citizens of the state decrease the state will cease to exist when that number reaches the vanishing point. The truth, or in this context, Christianity, is quite opposite in character:

> Christianity stands in a different relation to number: one single true Christian is enough to justify the assertion that Christianity is inversely proportionate to number--if everyone were to become Christian, the concept 'Christian' (*Christen*) is snuffed out; for the concept of Christian is a polemical concept, one can only be a Christian in opposition (*Modsaetning*) or contrarily.[3]

vi. *Conclusion of Kierkegaard's Reflections on Actual Society*.--

In the preceding sections we have noted how Kierkegaard conducted his analysis of society by dealing with the component parts of society as he saw them, namely, the family, the press, the state, and the church. Through such an analysis, which could be conducted by any reflective individual, Kierkegaard obtained the information necessary to form judgments of value regarding these component parts.

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[1] Kierkegaard, *The Last Years*, 40, 41.

[2] Kierkegaard, *Samlede Vaerker*, XIX, *Øieblikket*, 139.

[3] *Ibid*.

Kierkegaard understood social entities to be the ethical expression of natural datum. The family was the responsible form of expression for the biologically motivated drive to propagate the species. The press was the expression of the process of the universal diffusion of information, a process based on the numerical. The state was the responsible form of the organization of groups of individuals for the purpose of protection and enjoyment, the enjoyment of money and property. The actual church, which should have been true to its constituting basis--suffering as opposed to enjoyment--had settled for enjoyment, thus becoming a sort of appendage, an unnecessary duplication of the state.

Kierkegaard's value conclusions were, in general, that the family is inferior because it is oriented toward natural impulses instead of toward the ideal. The church as an existing institution received his most polemical denunciations because he believed it to be unfaithful to its proper role, that is, the representation with strict honesty of the religious sphere of existence. Since the church had the most important role, according to Kierkegaard, he had the highest hopes for it, and the most uncompromising denunciations of it when it failed. The state, which, like the family, was based on the natural animal impulses of man did not receive such a harsh denunciation as the church principally because Kierkegaard believed that it was fulfilling its proper role, although that role was secondary to the sphere of ideal religion.

It is important to note that actual society, in Kierkegaard's theory, is in principle not ideal. The actual is not a stage on the way to the ideal, but is an expression of different, opposite principles. The actual not only fails, as when it is cruel, but fails necessarily. It is natural and numerical, not spiritual and individual. Even at its very pure best, actual society would be bad.

The family, ideally considered, was the scene of gross cruelty and denigrating falsehood. From the point of view of the ideal, the family ought to be abolished, even if this were to mean the end of the human race, which in Kierkegaard's opinion would be a matter of small importance.

The state, which Kierkegaard believed to be fulfilling its secondary role much more satisfactorily than was recognized at the time, was not ideal when it established religion and when it permitted the freedom of the press.

The church, which was also far from ideal, presented a more complicated problem to Kierkegaard. That problem was of the relation of the two aspects of the ideal, aspects which we shall explore more fully later, namely the Individual with true Christianity. Kierkegaard did not call for the abolition of the church, yet he was not full of hope for its significant improvement, as was Grundtvig.

2. Ideal Society

Kierkegaard understood society as it actually was to be holistic in character. It was based upon number, the numerical, upon similarities which could be counted. This was opposed to society as it ought to be, that is, if society is the correct term, as individualistic, unique, not countable.

It can be questioned whether the ideal society is not a contradiction in terms. Society, it would seem, is necessarily objective, a plurality. On the other hand, the ideal is unique, subjective. On this basis it would seem that Kierkegaard's social theory could be only negative, that is, by reminding men that the social is never ideal and by criticizing the actual for being actual, pressing it to allow the greatest opportunity for the spiritual to develop.

According to Kierkegaard's theory, the only ideal social entity is the church, the ideal church. This is in some sense as unique as the individual. Even here, though, it is hard to see why the ideal church would not be only so many individual believers.

Perhaps these questions will be resolved if we consider the fact that the definition which Kierkegaard gives to individualism is a religious one. Therefore, let us begin our consideration of whatever ideal society Kierkegaard thought possible or desirable with a statement about the character of the ideal as he used this notion in his writings. Although it has been obvious that Kierkegaard depends heavily upon the notion of the ideal from the analysis of actual society, yet Kierkegaard does not provide much source material for the direct consideration of the ideal.

i. Kierkegaard's Characterization of the Ideal.--Kierkegaard evidently thinks that the notion of the ideal is sufficiently intelligible that no extensive explanation of his meaning is required. As he refers to the ideal in his analysis of society and of the individual existent's life, the ideal is a norm or goal, a perfect type which is given explicit content by Christianity in its proper sense.

> We laugh when we see a man looking for his spectacles when they are on his nose.
>
> But the striving of 'Christendom' is in its way even more ridiculous.
>
> The truth about the Christian ideal is that it has existed, Christ has lived, the Model has been given. And this ideal is related to the single person. Only as a single person can there be any talk of striving for it. And if the single person is to strive for it he must as a matter of course turn in the direction of the existence of the ideal, he must turn back to it, if he really is to strive for it.
>
> Christendom has turned the matter thus: the ideal for being a Christian is a goal lying infinitely distant in the future, and this is what we must strive for. So Christendom turns its back on the true ideal, which has existed, and (in the name of striving for it) strives away from it. And that something may come of this striving for that ideal in the far future (so Christendom sees the matter) everyone must unite, with united strength everyone must strive, for this is how success will be achieved. Yes, success is to be achieved by striving with united strength with regard to an effort in which the truth is that only the single person, each single person, can strive. 'Take

> courage again,' Christendom cries out enthusiastically. 'Let us strive all together. We shall succeed. Only do not lose courage, but strengthen your hearts with the thought that Christianity is perfectible and that it is progressing. So onwards, ever onwards, to that goal which is lying ahead of us in the infinite distance--onwards to the ideal.' And from the Christian standpoint the ideal existed 1,800 years ago.[1]

Thus the ideal is the perfect type, and the model for that ideal is Christ, who has existed. The ideal according to Kierkegaard is the object of the will. The ideal is not naturally desired, unless that desire is educated by the higher knowledge of the mind of the existing individual. Thus:

> when the ideal is produced as the ethico-religious demand, it is the most dreadful torture for man; it kills in him, in the most painful way, everything in which he really finds his life, in the most painful way it shows him his own wretchedness, it keeps him in sleepless unrest, whereas finitude lulls him into enjoyment.
> That is why Christianity is called, and is, hatred of man.[2]

The ideal is attainable, at least insofar as man is spiritual. This is the reference of suffering in relation to the ideal. Man naturally loves finitude. Yet he aspires after infinity, and the tension produced in the process is the suffering. Suffering is the constituting element in the religious sphere of existence, as we noted in the previous chapter. Suffering is the consequence of existence with its paradoxical combination of the ideal or spiritual with the actual or natural.

Kierkegaard believed that once the suffering of the religious stage were accepted the relation between the ideal and the church as it ought to be would become plain. That is, if the Individual were to accept the truth for himself in subjective inwardness, the connection between the solitary individual and the other individuals would become apparent, in terms of the absolute:

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[1] Kierkegaard, The Last Years, 366.

[2] Ibid., 308.

> For true primitivity (and without this it is impossible to become a Christian) one must be literally alone, alone with God. Only then can the conflict of sympathy arise, for then one has the human race on one's conscience.[1]

This connection between individuals who exist in the authentically religious sense is not entirely clear in Kierkegaard, although it provides, whatever its precise nature, the only warrant we have for speaking of ideal "society." Whatever it means to have "the human race on one's conscience" is connected with the church in the ideal sense, Christianity as opposed to Christendom.

Truth about society, according to Kierkegaard, is whatever truth can be appropriated personally in the process of making individual decisions which produce life at a given level of existence. Such truth is subjective in the sense that it is truth which involves personal responsibility for actions chosen in the light of ideal principles. It is only through those individuals who are related by suffering to the ideal that society is an ideal sense can be comprehended or produced.

ii. The Implementation of the Ideal.--Let us attempt to clarify the character of the ideal by examining Kierkegaard's prescriptions for its implementation.

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[1] *Ibid.*, 249.

During Kierkegaard's lifetime the question of the justification for revolutionary change was widely debated. Revolutions swept Europe during 1848.[1] France, Germany, the Austrian Empire, Italy, Ireland, and Denmark were all agitated by the ideals of the French Revolution of 1789 and by class pressure for such reform.[2] Because of such widespread revolutionary activity, it was commonly observed that they were surely living in a "revolutionary time."

Kierkegaard rejected such an analysis of the factors in contemporary life. Rather, he thought, the times were opposed to true revolution:

> A revolutionary age is an age of action; ours is the age of advertisement and publicity. Nothing ever happens but there is immediate publicity everywhere. In the present age a rebellion is, of all things, the most unthinkable.

As opposed to a truly revolutionary age, Kierkegaard wrote,

> our age is essentially one of understanding and reflection, without passion, momentarily bursting into enthusiasm, and shrewdly relapsing into repose.[4]

Understanding and reflection in this context are intended to contrast with decision and the will. Change is not possible in any basic sense--in the sense of the passage from one sphere of existence to another--on the basis of understanding, but only by means of the will. Kierkegaard wrote that even suicides at the time deliberated so long and thoroughly about the possibility of suicide that they may be said to have died from deliberation rather than from the deed itself.

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[1] Priscilla Robertson, Revolutions of 1848, a Social History (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 3.

[2] R. W. Postgate, Revolution from 1789 to 1906 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), 139.

[3] Søren Kierkegaard, The Present Age, trans. Alexander Dru, intro. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 35.

[4] *Ibid.*, 33.

The difficulty Kierkegaard observes is that while everyone agrees that something must be done to improve society, yet

> the present generation seems . . . to have made a solemn resolution that the next generation should set to work seriously, and in order to avoid disturbing or delaying the next generation, the present attends to the banquets.[1]

Grundtvig, for one, disagreed. He believed that the times were indeed times of action. Walter Kaufmann also criticizes Kierkegaard for incorrectly reading the signs of the times. Kaufmann writes that it is ironic that Kierkegaard should have thought that a revolution was unthinkable in his present age, 1846, when in 1847 civil war broke out in Switzerland and by 1848 revolutions were sweeping Europe.[2]

While it is not necessary for us to attempt to make Kierkegaard more consistent than he actually is, we might observe that Kierkegaard was not attempting to be a seer or an astrologer. He never claimed the ability to fortell future events like an occult wonder-worker. Rather, Kierkegaard was making the point that many so-called "revolutions" amounted to nothing more than the rearranging of the existing features of actual society. Such occasions should not be properly designated as a revolution. Whatever historians might choose to call them, they would not qualify as revolutions in Kierkegaard's sense. This seems to imply a distinction within Kierkegaard's thought between what might be called "actual" as opposed to "ideal" revolutions. That is, an ideal revolution, so to speak, would be a revolution within the religious sphere of existence, a reformation. Again, that is to say, such an event would be whatever steps were required to bring about the true, ideal church, the only ideal social entity in Kierkegaard's thought. Thus:

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[1] Ibid., 36.

[2] Ibid., 20.

> Certainly there must be a reformation; and it will be a fearful reformation, in comparison with which the Lutheran reformation will only be a joke (a fearful reformation, which will have as its battle-cry, 'shall he find faith on the earth?' (Luke 18:8), and which will be recognized by millions of men falling away from Christianity). For the truth is that Christianity simply does not exist. It will be a terrible thing when a generation which is coddled in a childish Christianity, and captivated by the illusion that they are Christians, is struck once more with the mortal blow of what it means to become Christian, to be Christian.
>
> Paganism understood rightly that Christianity is hatred of men--so terrible was it to become a Christian. But it is even more frightful, when one is coddled and softened with a little of the syrup which is called Christianity, when one is captive to the illusion that one is a Christian, to have to learn from the beginning again . . . .
>
> Therefore, as I understand it, since God is patient, he looks at it and does not reject the whole race, he does not even set them a task which would be their destruction.
>
> But this does not mean that everything will go on as before. No, a beginning has to be made.
>
> We have to draw up a balance in all truth--and this is my task, so I understand it.[1]

It is to be noted that Kierkegaard has assumed both the possibility and the desirability of such an ecclesiastical revolution.

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[1] Kierkegaard, The Last Years, 330, 331.

He does not specify the precise character of such an event,[1] nor does he clarify the relationship which such a reformation would have to the Individual, which had seemed to be the only medium for the realization of religious value. The most likely answer to these questions would be that the church in the ideal sense would provide the most likely framework for such values, and the empirical content for such a reformation would come from the purified tradition of the ideal church, beginning with "The New Testament." This would result in ideal society on Kierkegaard's principles, a society which was based on the religious sphere of existence, and one which would be free from the corruption of the actual church. These matters raise some further critical questions which we shall investigate in a moment.

It remains to note here that Kierkegaard was intending this revolution within the religious sphere to begin with "honesty." Pure categories of thought appropriate to religion were to be employed by the leaders of the purified church. This would be a change from the errors of Christendom to the truth of Christianity:

> Christianity in the New Testament has to do with man's will, everything turns upon changing the will, every expression

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[1] Thus the "death of God" movement as an event--leaving out of consideration the precise concepts involved, such as the notion that the death of God is an "historical" event that has occured within our time--might well be considered part of such a reformation as Kierkegaard was urging.

> (forsake the world, deny yourself, die to the world, and so on)--everything is related to this basic idea in Christianity which makes it what it is--a change of will.
>
> In Christendom, on the other hand, the whole of Christianity has been transferred to intellectuality; so it becomes a doctrine, and our whole concern is with the intellectual.[1]

Together with Kierkegaard's strong emphasis on the will also went the emphasis on the importance of authority. In fact, Kierkegaard was of the opinion that authority was of such importance that even when class war threatened to break out, authority as constituted in the old order of society would not necessarily be threatened. Once, while visiting the king at Sorgenfrie, Kierkegaard read him Part One from his new book, Works of Love, a work which he had been writing about the same time as Marx and Engels were working on The Communist Manifesto. The king was much less interested in Kierkegaard's new book than he was in talking about the threat of communism and the possible onset of class war:

> That day he led the conversation to communism of which he was plainly enough anxious and afraid. I explained to him that as I understood it the whole movement which was impending was a movement which did not come in contact with kings. It would be a fight between classes, but the fighting parties would always find it in their interest to be on good terms with the King. It was a return to the problems of antiquity and it was therefore easy to see that in a sense the King would stand outside them. It would be like the fights in a house between the cellar and the ground-floor, and between these and the first floor, but the landlord would not be attacked.[2]

It is evident that Kierkegaard did not understand the character of class war as developed by the communist theoreticians. Of course, he did not have the benefit of the large supply of literature on the subject which has subsequently been written. Several communist classics had yet to be written. Kierkegaard was mistaken in assuring the king that both the person and the authority of the king would be immune from attack.[1]

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[1] Kierkegaard, The Last Years, 226.

[2] Kierkegaard, The Journals of Kierkegaard, 154, 155.

Nevertheless, authority must be exercised by some agency in every society. Order must be maintained, even communist order. Thus, in this sense, which is broader than Kierkegaard's words of comfort to the king but not broader than Kierkegaard's general meaning, "the King" as a part of the structure of society as such would not be affected. "The King" in this sense could be equally well named "President" or "Party Chairman." The key idea is that society as such requires the function of authority.

When Kierkegaard, in his interview with the king, mentioned a return to the problems of antiquity it is possible that he had in mind a reference of his own in an earlier book to the scheme of the three ages:

> The dialectic of antiquity tended towards leadership (the great individual and the masses--the free man and the slaves); so far the dialectic of Christendom tends towards representation (the majority sees itself in its representative and is set free by the consciousness that it is the majority which it represented, in a sort of self-consciousness); the dialectic

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[1] At the same time, it should be noted that the nineteenth century social democratic parties often acted as Kierkegaard expected, as an alliance of crown and workers. Austromarxism was a case in point.

> of the present age tends towards equality, and its most logical--though mistaken--fulfillment is levelling, as the negative unity of the negative reciprocity of all individuals.
>
> It must be obvious to everyone that the profound significance of the levelling process lies in the fact that it means the predominance of the category 'generation' over the category 'individuality.'[1]

Kierkegaard continues with this thought to say that the transformation of society will be possible only when what is called the "levelling process"--the extreme demand for equality reinforced by the action of the press in discrediting any qualitative differences between individuals--is overcome:

> Only by suffering can the 'unrecognizable' dare to help on the levelling process and, by the same suffering action, judge the instruments. He dare not overcome the levelling process directly, that would be his end, for it would be the same as acting with authority. But he will overcome it in suffering, and in that way express once more the law of his existence, which is not to dominate, to guide, to lead, but to serve in suffering and help indirectly.[2]

Thus it can be seen that in this description of the way by which society may be altered, Kierkegaard uses the description of the individual who is acting out of religious motives, whose basis for action--suffering--is the constituting element of the religious sphere of existence. Thus society in Kierkegaard's view cannot be changed purely on the basis of political principles. It must instead be improved only by reference to a religious basis. The authority, then, which operates on the political level, is provisional in the sense that it is subordinate to the religious sphere. Political authority is not subordinate to anything else while it operates within its own sphere, that is, on the ethical stage, and as the expression of natural datum. However, when it is found wanting it is so judged on a religious basis, and as such, the only adequate transformation for political authority, according to Kierkegaard, is into the suffering of the religious sphere. The authority which is the ultimate point of reference is that which is in harmony with "absolute majesty." That is, only God has the ultimate authority.

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[1] Kierkegaard, The Present Age, 52.

[2] Ibid., 83.

The description we have quoted above from Kierkegaard reveals what he considers to be the appropriate means for the transformation of actual society into ideal society. This is "ideal" revolution, in the sense which we have noted earlier. It is interesting that Kierkegaard, as if realizing how precarious such a practical prescription might be, as if fearing that his description might be made into a programme for political action, adds:

> But I break off. All this is only fooling, for if it is true that every man must work for his own salvation, then all the prophecies about the future of the world are only valuable and allowable as recreation, or as a joke, like bowling or playing cards.[1]

Because of his belief in subjectivity, it is to be noted that Kierkegaard always stops short of providing any specific prescription for action which could lead to any specific revolution. Kierkegaard insists that reform is desirable, possible, and necessary, but he leaves the means for such a course of action indeterminate.

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[1] *Ibid.*, 84.

What influence, then, may an individual have upon the quality of society? According to Kierkegaard, that depends directly upon the quality of the individual. Thus Kierkegaard writes:

> the existence of a Christian touches existence. It is no doubt true that he cannot be said to bring with him originality in the sense of genius, but he personally assumes the demands of Christianity with originality, in regard to being a Christian (and ethically, as is shown elsewhere, originality means to stake everything, to risk everything, First the kingdom of God), and therefore pays no attention to the miserable saying: that one must take the world as it is.[1]

When the question is asked as to what kind of a world it should be, the question of the ideal, Kierkegaard replies that the ideals for the individual and for society as it should be are identical, that is, they are both "New Testament" Christianity:

> The point of Christianity is that man is spirit, and spirit is self-differentiation. Christianity's infinitely exalted thought is that every Christian becomes one by different ways and different modes--always diversity, which is precisely what God wills, he who (hates of all mere aping, which is absence of spirit) is inexhaustible in differentiating.[2]

In other words, Kierkegaard is saying that it is only by becoming an authentic Individual that one will be in a position to help society to improve. This improvement is on the basis of the religious sphere of existence. Whatever cohesion there may be said to be between like-minded individuals is not of a necessary or mediating nature, for the bond between authentic individuals or witnesses to the truth depends upon the absolute, upon the will of God, and remains as much a mystery as does any such paradox, in Kierkegaard's view. Ideal society as such is not a contradiction in terms, but we may say that it remains a comparatively indefinite concept, only describable in formal terms. Its content depends upon the will of the absolute.

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[1] Kierkegaard, The Journals of Kierkegaard, 248.

[2] Kierkegaard, The Last Years, 245.

Kierkegaard's pervasive emphasis on the will affects his social theory as much as does his concept of the Individual. Because of this, Kierkegaard cannot supply a programme for revolution which would certainly transform actual society into actual society. The will is at best only marginally educable. A rational plan for reform would thus be illogical. The only true freedom was subjective, internal, not objective and external to the Individual. With this in mind, Kierkegaard wrote in his Journal:

> People hardly ever make use of the freedom which they have, for example, freedom of thought; instead they demand freedom of speech as a compensation.[1]

3. Conclusion

Kierkegaard believed that each of the units of actual society, the family, the press, the state, and the actual church, were the ethical expressions of the natural, animal part of man as an existing creature. As such they were opposed to the ideal, to spiritual development, the religious sphere of existence. The goal for the individual should be to escape from actual society by choosing the higher levels of existence.

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[1] Kierkegaard, Journal, April 14, 1838.

The unresolved problem in Kierkegaard's formulations is an ambiguity in the use of "ideal." He uses the term in two ways, both as the best of its type and as the spiritual. Thus the ideal as the best of its type, the natural unit, the family at its best, is still not the ideal as the spiritual. Therefore, one can distinguish within the discussions of the family and of the state between bad and better of its type, as Kierkegaard did when he voiced his appreciation of the protection of property which the state should and did provide. However, because the state restrained crime did not qualify it to teach virtue, in Kierkegaard's view. In other words, even the best state is still basically natural and so inferior to the spiritual ideal, and cannot be otherwise.

When the church is considered a different problem presents itself. Here the actual church is contrasted with the ideal church, the ideal in the second sense, the spiritual. However, the actual church, unlike the actual state, is not an actual institution, it cannot claim the excuse of being the best of its type. Its type is the spiritual, and the fault Kierkegaard sees with the actual church is that it has been dishonestly claiming to be true to its (spiritual) ideal type. It could be argued that, as Kierkegaard divided the religious stage into religiousness A and B, he could also have divided the church into two sections on the same basis. Then he could have possibly been tolerant of the failings of the actual church as he was comparatively tolerant of the lower stage of religiousness. However, Kierkegaard did not make such a distinction. The natural type was allowed no place in his conception of ideal society in the form of the church.

Thus while society basically cannot be ideal in the second sense, that is, spiritual, the church can and should. All we can ask of actual society on Kierkegaard's premises is that it be the best possible natural institution. Only the church could be ideal not in the sense of being the best possible but in the sense of the spiritual. Kierkegaard was concerned primarily with the natural versus the spiritual, and only secondarily with what is worse or better within the natural.

The individual is the only proper unit of value, Kierkegaard held. Society does not complete the individual in any way, nor replace the individual with some abstract greater good. The individual, as we have seen, is reformed by the process of progressing through the three spheres of existence. After dethroning both the aesthetic and the ethical the individual could allow the religious principle of suffering to have its proper place in his life. By such a progression the individual will at last become himself, his true self. Up to this point Kierkegaard's social theory appears to be nothing more than a prescription for individuals.

However, just as "religiousness B" was considered by Kierkegaard to be the ideal form of individual harmony, so Kierkegaard was of the opinion that the church in a spiritual sense was the ideal form for social harmony. Thus it cannot be said that Kierkegaard was insensitive to the needs and the possibilities for social reform. His conception of improvement differed greatly from the policies which were being recommended at the time, such as constitutional reform, representative government, and the formation of public opinion by means of a free press. Refusing to trust such measures to provide any basic improvement in community life, Kierkegaard believed that subjective inwardness and the individual life were the only proper bases for judging improvement. For this reason the press and the poll and public opinion and the ballot and committees and representative government were hindrances rather than helps to genuine improvement. The only adequate basis for improvement in ecclesiastical life, and thus in principle for all ideal social life, is honesty.

If the church is to be the form of the ideal society, it is important to keep in mind that Kierkegaard did not mean the established church of Denmark. The situation at the time, as Kierkegaard saw it, was that there had been an inner disintegration within the Christian religion. The internal bond between faith and cult had been broken. The cult was teaching something quite foreign to the true faith, as Kierkegaard saw it. It was still possible, he felt, to hold to the faith if it were cast in a new philosophical form, that of the philosophy of existence. The interesting fact, which causes much of the speculation about whether Kierkegaard had any social philosophy at all, was that he firmly refused to provide his new vehicle for the faith with any new cultus, refusing either to enlist "disciples" or to found another institution. Grundtvig did not have any such scruples.

When Nietzsche viewed the same breakdown of the spiritual values of the civilization, he drew the opposite conclusion. He denied that the essence of the Christian faith could still support any positive values. Positive values must instead be founded upon an entirely new basis, he believed. Kierkegaard conceived of the new values as being articulated by "the exception," "the Individual." Contrary to Nietzsche, Kierkegaard believed that once the Christian religion were purified from the epicureanism of the established church, it would be true to its foundation.

Both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche agreed in making the problem of personality central for philosophy. For both, the deepest question for thought and future existence was the problem of what kind of personality ought to be developed. In this concern they stood opposed to philosophers such as Hegel who preferred to make society and its institutions central.

Political considerations remain, in Kierkegaard's estimation, inferior to religious truth. Whatever significant improvement is possible for society must be based on religion, as Kierkegaard so understands it, in its ideal aspect. Kierkegaard's social thought, especially in his Attack Upon "Christendom," constitutes a stimulus par excellence, a stimulus calling for a life-response. Kierkegaard's challenge to accepted social practice has both theoretical foundations in his thought and, as we have seen, definite implications for the ideal development of social life.

CHAPTER IV

N. F. S. GRUNDTVIG'S PHILOSOPHICAL POSITION

This chapter will provide a general orientation to the philosophical position of Grundtvig prior to the more detailed consideration of his social thought. Since Grundtvig is less well known than Kierkegaard, we shall begin by providing some identification, following which we shall examine Grundtvig's thought under the systematic headings of aesthetics, epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics.

1. Grundtvig's Life

Nicolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig was born at Udby, South Zealand, Denmark, on September 8, 1783.[1] He died in 1872.[2] His father was a pastor in the State Church serving rural and impoverished parishes. Frederik, as he was called, was the youngest child in a family of four sons and one daughter.

If it can be said of Kierkegaard that he lived a life of self-containment, reacting to interior events, it can be said of Grundtvig that he lived a life oriented much more toward other people, reacting to exterior events. This may partially explain why social development became more important for Grundtvig than the individual will.

One exterior event deeply affecting Grundtvig was the Battle of

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[1] N. F. S. Grundtvig, Vaerker i Udvalg, ed. G. Christensen and Hal Koch (København: Gyldendal, 1940), I, viii.

[2] *Ibid.*, VI, x.

Maundy Thursday, which he witnessed from the Langelinje on April 2, 1801.[1] Denmark had been one member of the Armed Neutrality League which had been formed in the effort to avoid entanglement in the war between Britain and France. The British, fearful that the considerable Danish fleet might fall into the hands of Napoleon, sent Nelson with a fleet which attacked Copenhagen. The British were victorious. This battle ended the hundred years of peace in Denmark.[2] Grundtvig's patriotism, which may seem excessive at times, was due to his belief that the times were extraordinary, and that the life of the country was at stake.

Grundtvig's study of theology was guided by liberal thinkers. The influence of Schleiermacher, who was born in 1768, reached him. Grundtvig's teachers included Professor Gamborg, who was known for his attacks on the Pentateuch narrative; C. F. Horneman, who lectured on Romans under two headings--what Paul thought, and what Paul ought to have thought; and D. G. Moldenhawer, called "the Jesuit because he never denied but always eluded the Christian truths."[3] Grundtvig welcomed this liberal approach to religious doctrine, although his father disapproved.

In 1805, while serving as a tutor for a wealthy family at Langeland, Grundtvig wrote that the emotions were more important than reason in the search for truth.[1] Grundtvig came to this conclusion because he had fallen in love with Constance Leth, the wife of the master of the manor. She was six years older than Grundtvig, and had a lively and cheerful disposition. She freely gave her friendship to the young tutor, not fully realizing what a tempest she had raised in his heart. Grundtvig later wrote to his friend Molbech:

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[1] E. L. Allen, Bishop Grundtvig: A Prophet of the North (London: James Clark & Co., Ltd., n. d.), 12.

[2] Ibid., 13.

[3] Grundtvig, in Hal Koch, Grundtvig, trans. Llewellyn Jones (Yellow Springs, Ohio: The Antioch Press, 1952), xi.

> But--now the time had come. I saw a woman, and I, love's coldest and bitterest condemner loved at first sight, as deeply, as ardently, as is possible for a mortal. The past vanished before my eyes, or, rather, coalesced with the present, which appeared in the form of my beloved. Yes, I have lived, lived in this world and encompassed all around me with love, because all seemed to exist for the sake of one and to revolve about the one point where my thoughts and feelings converged. Yet brief was this bliss, for I needed only to know that I loved to become as unhappy as I could be. The decencies stood as an unscaleable wall between us, and nature had in addition set a yawning gulf between our existences.[2]

Grundtvig fled his feelings by returning to Copenhagen and there attempting to establish his reputation as an author. Beginning in 1807 Denmark had been forced into another war against her own interests. Denmark backed France against England. In 1814 the war ended with England once again victorious. Thereupon Denmark lost Norway to Sweden. The resultant strain upon the economy was too severe, and Denmark went bankrupt.[3]

Grundtvig was not allowed to complete his plans, however, due to family responsibilities. His father's health was failing, and he asked

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[1] Grundtvig, Vaerker i Udvalg, I, 103 ff.

[2] Grundtvig, in Koch, 19.

[3] Koch, 29.

Frederik to come home to be his assistant. Retirement was out of the question because it would have meant too much financial loss. The Grundtvigs were a poor family. Two of Frederik's older brothers, Jacob and Niels, had died some years earlier while serving as missionaries in the Danish colony on the Guinea coast. His oldest brother, Otto, was already in his own pastorate. Thus Frederik was the only son in a position to help his father directly. On March 5, 1810, Frederik wrote home that he would surely "not shirk the sacred duty of standing by a venerable father in his old age."[1]

Thus it was that in 1810 Grundtvig preached and published his probationary sermon as part of the application for an ecclesiastical appointment. The sermon was entitled, "Why Has the Word of the Lord Disappeared from His House?" It was a strong attack upon the unbelief of the age and the theological liberalism of the clergy. The tract greatly displeased the examining officials, who were themselves liberal in doctrine.[2]

Grundtvig did not wish to return to Udby to be his father's assistant, although he recognized this to be his duty. It is possible to speculate, therefore, that the strongly orthodox tone of his sermon coinciding with his father's beliefs was subconsciously calculated to cause difficulties with the liberal church authorities. The case against Grundtvig was continued for nearly a year, ending by a reprimand from the consistory, the highest authority from within the university.[3]

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[1] Grundtvig, Vaerker i Udvalg, I, 261. [2] Koch, 41. [3] Ibid.

It was during this time that Grundtvig first felt the desire to be a reformer of the church. While reading Kotzebue's History of Prussia Grundtvig was indignant when he read the statement that the Teutonic Knights had abandoned the living green oak for the withered cross.[1] He flung the book across the room, sprang from his chair, and resolved to become a reformer.

However, Grundtvig felt at the same time that he was unworthy for such a task.

> Suddenly it was as if scales had fallen from the eyes of my mind, my pride and uncharitableness stood incarnate before me, and no remorse or repentance was to be found in me for my past sins. Now was I nigh to despair, my reason trembled, but my heart remained hard and cold.[2]

Depressed and melancholy over his guilt at the illicit love for Constance Leth, he broke down under the strain of self-reproach. On the road home to Udby, Grundtvig and a friend stopped overnight at the inn of Vindbyholt. In the middle of the night, Grundtvig was on his knees shouting prayers at the top of his lungs, under the delusion that the devil as a snake was literally winding himself around his body. Retrospective psychiatric inquiry into the matter has concluded that Grundtvig oscillated between manic and depressive states.[3]

Grundtvig wrote, significantly enough, that

> Thought was confused, but the vision was true. With shadows I fenced, it was what I could do as an echo from the land of shadows.[4]

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[1] Grundtvig, Vaerker, I, 330, 331.

[2] Grundtvig, in Koch, 47.

[3] Koch, 49.

[4] Grundtvig, in Koch, 55.

Grundtvig came to think that thought in itself was no adequate help in his crisis. He could not by himself turn his vision of becoming a reformer into reality. He was himself only "an echo from the land of shadows." As he was nursed back to health by his family and friends and by the congregation--especially through the singing of Christmas hymns--Grundtvig began to believe that the group in some sense completed the individual.

When he became engaged to Lise Blicher in 1811,[1] Grundtvig believed that, in his words, "Life is of double nature, whole only in man and woman. If cruelly divided by a wall, life from both must vanish."[2] While Kierkegaard always remained single, Grundtvig never remained single. In later years, when his first wife died, Grundtvig remarried, and when his second wife also died, ha married for a third time.[3]

In 1812 Grundtvig published the Short View of World History as a Continuity.[4] This work caused a sensation largely because of its harsh judgments upon men still living. In this book Grundtvig definitely rejects the intellectual ideals of the enlightenment in favor of the passionate and partisan view that world history is based exclusively upon a religious point of view. This book was viewed with alarm by the academic community of Copenhagen because it appeared to represent a return to medieval obscurantism.

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[1] Grundtvig, Vaerker, I, 311. [2] Grundtvig, in Koch, 57.

[3] Koch, 114.

[4] Grundtvig, Vaerker, I, Kort Begreb af Verdens Krønike i Sammenhaeng, 335.

1825 was the year of the attack upon Clausen, an event which is of great importance for the development and interpretation of Grundtvig's thought. In August Professor Henrik N. Clausen published a book entitled Church Government, Dogma, and Rite in Catholicism and Protestantism in which he spoke somewhat disparagingly of Luther, questioned the authority of the Bible and left a place for reason in Christian theology.[1] Within the same month Grundtvig rushed an attack upon both the book and its author into print, called The Church's Answer to Professor of Theology, Dr. H. N. Clausen. Grundtvig demanded that Clausen either retract his theologically liberal opinions or resign from his post as a teacher of ministers at the seminary. Clausen, as might reasonably be expected, refused either course of action and instead instituted a libel suit against Grundtvig. The legal action, which was quite long and drawn-out, resulted in a judgment against Grundtvig. Among other things, he was required to submit all his prospective publications to the censor for approval.[2]

These proceedings were significant for the thought of Grundtvig because they convinced him that freedom of expression within the church and the state were of basic importance. Such freedom must be necessary in principle, he concluded, to ensure the rights of orthodox believers as well as liberals to the unhampered expression of their convictions about truth in theological matters.

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[1] Grundtvig, Vaerker, III, Om Den Clausenske Injurie-Sag, 294.

[2] Ibid.

By 1832 Grundtvig had made three trips to England at the expense of the Crown for the purpose of conducting research in ancient Anglo-Saxon manuscripts.[1] These trips were important because they reinforced his belief that freedom was necessary in civil and ecclesiastical matters. What impressed Grundtvig most about England was the vital life and creative activity of the people, a result of the freedom they were granted.[2] In this way his experiences in England provided empirical confirmation for the theoretical formulations which Grundtvig had made in the course of the development of the Clausen affair.[3]

Through these years Grundtvig had constant difficulties supporting his family. He was not prosperous enough as an author to support himself by his writing, yet he was too notorious for the authorities in the church to appoint to a suitable parish. Wherever possible the ecclesiastical authorities even denied him permission to lead in public worship or to speak from the pulpits of the churches in Copenhagen. For example, in 1839 Grundtvig applied for permission to confirm his sons. Bishop Mynster denied the request with the remark, "Do you think we can give every giddy curate leave to confirm?"[4] Depressed, Grundtvig wrote:

> I have wanted full many a Christmas
> And hoped for trustingly;
> But prudence says: You won't get it,

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[1] Koch, 102.

[2] P. G. Lindhardt, Grundtvig (London: S. P. C. K., 1951), 102.

[3] Kaj Thaning, Grundtvig Studier (København: Danske Boghandleres, 1966), 106.

[4] Steen Johansen, Grundtvig-Studier, 1948 (København: Gyldendal, 1948), 1.

For giants bar the road to Church,
Which is free by the grace of God! [1]

These problems, economic and personal, led Grundtvig to apply again for an appointment to a parish of the state church. The post of minister at Vartov, a home for aged women, had fallen vacant. Bishop Mynster approved the appointment thinking that Grundtvig would do less harm there than if he were to organize an independent congregation as his friends had been urging him to do. Besides, Grundtvig was now fifty-six years old, and no doubt, Mynster hoped, approaching the evening of his life.[2] Mynster calculated incorrectly, for Grundtvig still had an active ministry before him of some thirty-three years. The many friends who followed Grundtvig to the chapel of Vartov Hospital for aged women, theological students, city people, and friends from Our Savior's Church and St. Frederik's, formed the nucleus of the group known as the "Grundtvigians."

Educational reform, which was one of Grundtvig's concerns, was helped by Queen Caroline. She had been quite critical of the schools which were provided for poor children in Copenhagen. Therefore, she persuaded the king to detach one such school from the jurisdiction of the school officials in the city. The school was then administered along the more progressive lines recommended by Grundtvig, that is, corporal punishment was abolished, unattractive courses were eliminated with civic studies substituted, and singing was encouraged. When the king visited the school the pupils sang a song of gratitude composed by Grundtvig.[3]

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[1] Grundtvig, in Koch, 111. [2] Koch, 110. [3] Ibid., xvi.

In 1848, as part of the revolutionary activity sweeping Europe, a national assembly was formed in Denmark for the purpose of drawing up a new constitution. Then in his sixties, Grundtvig was elected to the new parliament. The revolution in Denmark was peculiarly mild, but nevertheless profound in its results. A group of leading citizens had demanded of King Frederik VII that the absolute monarchy come to an end. They demanded that the nation be granted a constitution. The king granted their request.

Grundtvig was elected from the district of Praesto where he had once served the parish church. At first Grundtvig had refused the nomination to run for public office, as the other nominee was a bishop with whom he was not on good terms. Grundtvig did not wish to carry ecclesiastical opposition into a wider field. It turned out that the bishop was defeated by another opponent, but the successful candidate was later discovered to have had a shady past and resigned. A new election was held with the bishop eliminated, so Grundtvig ran as an independent candidate and won.[1]

During the campaign the parish constable, Jens Jensen, was running against Grundtvig on the "Friends of the Peasants" ticket. Their campaign slogan was, "No officials and no squires." On the occasion of one joint appearance, Jensen followed Grundtvig as a speaker and spoke forthrightly and fluently of the ability of the farmers to be their own spokesmen in the new parliament. Otherwise, he continued, it was not a pleasure for him to stand against Grundtvig, who had confirmed him thirty-six years before, and to whom he must give the highest testimonial as a broad-minded man and a real friend of the farmers. Having recalled these memories, Jensen was deeply moved, and declared to the astonished listeners that he himself would vote for Grundtvig and he urged the others to do so as well. Grundtvig received all but eleven votes, and wrote:

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[1] Ibid., xiv.

> Thus I became elected as a member of the Rigsdag in a wonderful, yet fundamentally a uniquely simple and natural way, so that the brilliant was eclipsed by the kindly.[1]

When Grundtvig took his seat in the constituent assembly he became the most radical member in the house. With unswerving consistency, often with too little sense of political realities, he was a fanatical champion of freedom in every part of civic life, from government and legislation to church and school and in to business and trade. In 1857, some nine years after his first election, Grundtvig closed his career in the Rigsdag.[2]

It should be remarked that Grundtvig had not favored any alteration in the absolute monarchy prior to 1848. He had been highly skeptical of the wisdom of parliamentary majority rule, fearing that it would lead to the least well qualified predominating at the expense of the more capable. The royal prerogative was where Grundtvig had placed his confidence. Yet because of the change of the times, Grundtvig wrote, "Do what we will, the reign of peasants and the masses is at our door."[3] Once convinced that parliamentary rule was desirable, Grundtvig worked diligently to extend the freedom of thought and expression which accompanied that change in the national life.

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[1] Grundtvig, in Koch, xiv.

[2] Koch, 113.

[3] Grundtvig, in Koch, 113.

Grundtvig was convinced that education was needed if the new democratic system was to work properly. The awakening of the people by means of education was called for to prevent the abuse of their new political role. We shall examine Grundtvig's educational theory in the following chapter.

When Grundtvig was seventy-nine years old recognition came to him in the formal sense. The king conferred on him the honorary title of bishop. On Grundtvig's eightieth birthday a "Friends' Meeting" was held which became an annual event.[1]

Denmark was defeated in a war with Prussia in 1864. Following this, a reactionary movement was initiated in the country. Grundtvig, then eighty-two, joined in the fight against the revocation of some of the liberal guarantees of civil freedom which were contained in the constitution he had helped institute. He argued that reactionary plans would bring a sad future to king and people. He spoke with great energy against "privilege, money-bags, and arithmetic."[2] Then the parliament passed the bill providing for the reactionary revision of the constitution, Grundtvig and his friends sought an audience with the king for the purpose of asking him to use his power of veto to kill the measure. They were not received, but still "the old man at Vartov" could console himself that he had done everything in his power to protect the civil freedoms of the people.[2]

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[1] Grundtvig, Vaerker, VI, 391.

[2] Koch, 114.

On Sunday, September 1, 1872, he stood for the last time in the pulpit at Vartov. The next day his son and his chaplain took turns reading to him. At three o'clock in the afternoon he announced that he was tired and would rest. A few minutes later he died peacefully, sitting in his arm-chair.[1]

As we turn to the exposition of Grundtvig's thought in general it will be helpful to keep two considerations in mind. The first is that a great many similarities can be noted between Grundtvig's thinking and the philosophical formulations of many of the noted German thinkers of the time, the post-kantian idealists. Thus similarities appear with Johann Georg Hamann (1730-1788), who had scorned the whole tendency of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, rationalism as well as empiricism, as leading to false dualisms, preferring instead of logical proofs the mystical assurances of the heart. Another representative of the philosophy of feeling comes to mind, Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), whose patriotic emphasis is similar to Grundtvig's. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743-1819) also comes to mind for his refusal to trust his spiritual treasures to reason, which was competent only to arrange and to organize, but which was lacking in creative power. Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814) was another prominent influence on the thought of the times, and his *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (1801-1808) was as immoderate in its patriotism as was Grundtvig. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854), whose enthusiasm for systems of thought led him to change his own formulations significantly, was also a major influence on Danish thought at the time, especially through the lectures of Steffens, Grundtvig's cousin, at the University of Copenhagen while Grundtvig was a student there. Schelling progressed through Fichte's moral-dutiful emphasis to a more comprehensive belief in the living reality of nature. Nature, which is positively real as latent spirit which tends toward spiritual realization, is with human history one of the two periods in spirit's continuous biography. The dominant philosophical thinker at the time was, of course, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), and Grundtvig could well be interpreted as a minor hegelian with his organic manner of thinking and, even more significantly, with the notion of the Volkgeist which he employed extensively in his social thought.

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[1] Allen, 38.

The second consideration to keep in mind throughout the general survey which follows is that Grundtvig's philosophy basically presupposes orthodox Christian theology in its Lutheran form. Thus, for example, if Grundtvig does not define precisely what he means by spirit, the explanation is to be found in the fact that he depends upon the revelation of the Christian faith, as preserved by the historic church and as exemplified by the church as a contemporary reality, to provide the content for his more general use of the term. Grundtvig characteristically saw as his principal opponents the rationalistic ecclesiastical officials of the established church, and, as we have seen in the section of biography, this estimate was generally correct. Thus Grundtvig would oppose a rationalistic approach to revelation by the confessional Lutheran approach, of which he saw himself as a part.

Nevertheless, it should be mentioned to avoid misunderstanding, at this point, that Grundtvig did not consider himself bound by any unduly literalistic conception of theology. That is to say, he considered himself to be a free agent in the formation of his theological views, even though they did agree essentially with confessional Lutheranism. He did diverge from the usual orthodox formulations, as we shall see in more detail at the end of this chapter, in his view of the Fall and its consequences on human reason, refusing to hold that human nature had become so depraved through the Fall as to be incapable of any right thinking whatever.

One of Grundtvig's last books was The Christian Catechism,[1] which can be taken as a good illustration of the theological presuppositions of his thought which we have referred to in this context. This work begins with "The Christian Baptismal Covenant" and proceeds through the "Three Articles of Faith" to "The Eternal Living Word from Our Lord's Own Mouth to the Congregation." It will help to keep in mind this generally orthodox frame of reference.

2. Aesthetics

We shall begin our survey of Grundtvig's general philosophical position by examining the topic of aesthetics. Our purpose is to survey his thought in detail only insofar as it has a direct bearing on his social philosophy. Therefore, this general survey is intended only as a general introduction for those readers who may not be familiar with

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[1] Grundtvig, Vaerker, VI, Den Christelige Børnelaerdom, 11 ff.

Grundtvig's published works.

We have chosen to begin this survey with the topic of aesthetics because so much of Grundtvig's literary effort was concentrated on poetry and the analysis and criticism of poetry. Grundtvig's theory of aesthetics, while not in vogue today, is nevertheless of decisive significance for the understanding of his thought as a whole.

Grundtvig held to the theory that art is essentially communication, the communication of spiritual and religious truth.[1] Thus the largest portion of Grundtvig's poetic work was directly religious in character. According to Grundtvig, art embodies the spiritual, which in turn is composed of two elements, religious truth and the national folk-spirit. Both of these elements, but more especially the latter, are of great significance for Grundtvig's social thought, as we shall see with more precision in the following chapter.

According to Grundtvig, art differs from conceptualized knowledge of the kind which is characteristic of science in that art is the spiritual transformation of emotions into intuitions and lyric visions. Thus the type of expression which would be appropriate to art is not the same type of expression which would be appropriate to the communication of scientific truth. In this sense considerations of form in the development of a work of art have their place: "a good poem is not just good, but good of its kind."[2] That is, a work of art must be harmonious in its internal form, but the work of art as such is judged by its merits in allowing the free communication of spiritual and religious truth.

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[1] Grundtvig, Vaerker, II, Danne-Virke IV, "Om Digterne Baggesen og Oehlenschlager," 220.

[2] Andreas Haarder, Grundtvig Studier, "Et gammelt indlaeg i en ny debat; Grundtvigs vurdering af Beowulf som kunstvaerk" (København: Gyldendal, 1965), 17.

It is interesting to note that Grundtvig's own artistic productions were dismissed by the literary critics of the day as totally lacking in artistic value. In 1824 Steffens, Grundtvig's cousin and the noted lecturer who had introduced Denmark to the thought of Schelling, paid a long anticipated call upon Grundtvig. Steffens, having been influenced by the famed poet Oehlenschlaeger, H. C. Oersted, and J. P. Mynster, urged him simply to put his pen on the shelf and cease to write.[1] Steffens objected to Grundtvig's literary efforts on the grounds that they displayed a mawkish patriotic flavor, a reprehensibly egoistic tendency, and were a crime against nature, historical thoroughness, poetic and scholarly form. The reader may judge for himself by the poetic reply that Grundtvig wrote following this interview:

I am no poet, not whole, not half,
That I will loudly declare;
I plow with the old one's calf,
All my honor lies there.

My lay is only an echo
Of our fathers' hero-ballads,
And my song therefore only extends
To giving the fathers praise.[2]

It is important to understand why Grundtvig did not follow the advice of these influential and respected literary men of the time. The correct answer is that according to Grundtvig the poet's proper goal is not art for art's sake, but art for the sake of revelation. The poem and the song are only weapons of the spirit. Their value is not dependent upon style alone but upon the truth and power of the content. Poetic form and technique are subsidiary to revelation. "What is worth anything comes in its proper vessel . . . . It is much better for the mold to crack than for the vision to be broken."[1]

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[1] Koch, 178.

[2] Grundtvig, in Koch, 177, 178.

According to Grundtvig the value of a poem was the character of its revelatory quality. More specifically, Grundtvig wrote: "By its truth and life, power and clarity do I value it."[2] Thus the correct goal for poetic production was clarity. This clarity was of a certain kind, namely clarity regarding human life. This is the clarity of truth, and it is characterized by power, or the presence of spirit.

We are now in a position to understand the form in which Grundtvig believed that clarity concerning human life could be attained. That form was mythology. Mythology is not properly interpreted as merely history because the ancient gods could not be explained as mere reflections of heroes who had actually lived. Neither were myths in Grundtvig's view nothing more than nature-myths. Myths are symbols, symbols of the eternal which resides in man. As such they are to be understood in the particular as the product of the spirit of the Scandinavian forefathers.

3. Epistemology

It can be seen from the preceding discussion that profound issues were raised by Grundtvig's aesthetic theory. In view of the fact that Grundtvig conceives of the function of art to be the communication of truth, the question naturally arises as to the definition of truth.

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[1] _Ibid_., 70.

[2] _Ibid_.

Truth (Sandhed) was, in Grundtvig's view, an objective matter. Truth was what was revealed by God. That truth needed merely to be discovered and learned to be communicated to others who would benefit from its possession. Grundtvig had difficulty in identifying precisely what was the content of this revealed and divine truth. He began initially by holding that the Scriptures are literally true. In a letter to Molbech, he wrote:

> If a Christian writes history, he must write it biblically, must flatly and without further proof call all doctrine that goes against the Bible falsehood and fallacy. But, you say, such judgment must not be called history: it is philosophy of history. Properly history is the truthful narration of what has occurred . . . . But is the narration no longer a truthful narration because in addition a truthful judgment is passed upon men and achievements relative to Bible and Christianity--why, in that case, Christ and the Bible are liars.[1]

However, the rationalist churchmen of the time were able with very little difficulty to point out the problems which arise when the whole Bible is taken as literally pure truth. Therefore, Grundtvig abandoned this view and distinguished between the divine and the human within Scripture. Then he distinguished between the Old Testament and the New. He went on to distinguish within the New Testament between the words of the Apostles and Jesus' own words. Then in this process he tried to isolate a single "key text," such as John 3:16. The end to Grundtvig's search for an absolutely reliable form of revealed truth was the so-called "Matchless Discovery,"[2] the Apostles' Creed at baptism.[3]

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[1] Ibid., 65.

[2] Allen, 67.

[3] Grundtvig, Vaerker, III, Om Daabs-Pagten, 303.

Having discovered what he called "the word from God's own mouth," Grundtvig used this truth of propositional revelation as the basis for his attack upon the rationalists within the church.[1] He considered this truth to be so infallible that no scholarly considerations could shake it yet so simple that even the most uneducated could understand it.

It is not here contended that Grundtvig's notion of the truth was particularly well conceived, nor that his notion of truth as revelation was a profound or original contribution to the philosophy of the time. It is significant, however, that he considered his notion of truth to be sufficiently certain to be the foundation of his various attempts to correct the thinking of his contemporaries.

4. Metaphysics

Since, as we have seen in the preceding section, Grundtvig considered truth to be objectively revealed, it is not surprising to discover that he also considered reality to be that which was revealed through the study of history.[2] As we trace the meaning of this notion it will be useful to keep in mind that Grundtvig did not initiate this idea but rather appropriated it from Schelling. According to the Steffens lectures, which had first introduced Schelling to Denmark, history was the revelation of the spirit. Steffens said:

> Today I shall start considering history, as in the previous sessions I have considered nature. There we saw a spirit

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[1] Grundtvig, Vaerker, II, Kirkens Gienmaele, 320.

[2] Grundtvig, Vaerker, IV, Nordens Mythologi, 18.

> which appears to have permeated all nature . . . . Mass itself, the material, would appear to be this spirit's half-transparent cloak, or rather its external organ--and history is its revelation.[1]

It can be seen, according to this set of ideas, that the study of history was the means through which reality could be understood. This does not necessarily imply the absolute rejection of the validity of natural science as a kindred means for the understanding of reality, but it does grant natural science only a secondary place. Material is reality's "half-transparent cloak," an image suggesting that matter obscures the spirit. However, this obscurity is only an obscurity in degree, the various levels of being are basically continuous with each other. It might be said, in this sense, that while Kierkegaard wrote an Either/Or, Grundtvig was engaged in writing a Both/And.

If it is through history that we know reality, a statement that we shall examine more closely in a moment, the reality that it reveals is neither solely mental nor material. He rejected the high regard of his contemporaries for the enlightenment with its emphasis on the key role of human reason.[2] Grundtvig acknowledged that the intellectual element in man was by no means unimportant, yet he insisted that the mind was only one part of man's total self. The emotions, for example, were a most significant addition or qualification of the purely intellectual definition of man.

This provides a point of difference with Hegel, who maintained that:

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[1] Koch, 31.

[2] Grundtvig, Vaerker, IV, Mands Minde, 242.

> Man is immortal in consequence of knowledge, for it is soul, and is a free, pure soul. Reasoned knowledge, thought, is the root of his life, of his immortality as a totality in himself. The animal soul is sunk in the life of the body, while Spirit, on the other hand, is a totality in itself.[1]

The self or the spirit is not defined adequately by what Grundtvig called cold reason, but rather it is intuited, or better, it is able to understand itself through the self-revelations of history. The important point in this context is to note that Grundtvig, in agreement with Schelling as interpreted through Steffens' lectures, believed that pure reason was not adequate to the complete understanding of human life or of nature in its concreteness. The mathematical or mechanical explanations of nature were inadequate. Nature was rather, according to this view, characterized by pulsing, throbbing life. This vitalistic conception took the form in Schelling and Grundtvig that there is a basic unity in all, that any analysis and dissection of the whole falsifies and distorts the perfection and the divinity of the whole. The lower forms of being are not hostile to spirit, but are rather its kin. Spirit and Nature, both infinite and finite, are but differing aspects of the One.[2] We shall trace the consequences of this fundamental unity for history and the comprehension of reality after we have made one further point explicit.

That is that if, as we have noted, Grundtvig thought that reality was not solely mental in character, neither was it solely material. Naturalism was explicitly rejected as being opposed to Christianity.[1] In other words, naturalism implied that strict necessity was operative in human affairs, which, if true, would leave no place for the operation of freedom in history. If there were no freedom, be believed, there would be no spirit.

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[1] G. W. F. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, trans. E. B. Speirs and J. B. Sanderson (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co., 1895), III, 58.

[2] Wilhelm Windelband, A History of Philosophy, trans. J. H. Tufts (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1958), II, 598.

Following the fundamental unity which was referred to above, world history was seen by both Schelling and Grundtvig as the continuous self-expression of the Godhead, a self-expression in which each nation and epoch has its assigned place.[2] World history is, in this sense, a divine work which does not cease and which we are called to continue by our own activities. Perceptions of reality are historical, or are gained through the historical process as the individual perceives its spiritual character.

Thus we can see that, for Grundtvig, reality was pre-eminently historical. Only through history and the study of the historical did one come into contact with reality. If it is not putting the case too strongly, one might say that Grundtvig substituted history for metaphysics. His _Weltanschauung_ was history.

The similarity of this view with Hegel is striking. Hegel wrote:

> That the History of the World, with all the changing scenes which its annals present, is this process of development and the realization of Spirit,--this is the true _Theodicaea_, the justification of God in History. Only this insight can reconcile Spirit with the History of the World--viz., that what has happened, and is happening every day, is not only

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[1] Grundtvig, _Vaerker_, IV, _Nordens Mythologi_, 23.

[2] _Ibid_., 126.

not "without God," but is essentially His Work.[1]

In the same frame of reference Grundtvig thought of his proper field as the investigation of the spirit as it worked in history.

> History I view as an unfolding drama which has thus only to be filled in by the creative spark within man and which then appears as the most sacred poetry, where gods and planets move with giant stride, proclaim life's strivings and its goal.[2]

The question arises from these considerations as to what Grundtvig meant by "history." He did not mean primarily the objective recounting of past events. He meant what is commonly called interpretive history. History as it exhibited the significance of human events was his concern. Grundtvig affirmed the idea of the coherence of the ages and asserted further that Christ was at the center of history.[3]

This, Grundtvig said, was the "historico-poetic" view of human life.[4] The artist is the one who is able to see the vision of the unity of all the varied aspects of existence. The vision of the ultimate unity of all things is convincingly clear to him. By means of the artistic forms which he employs, the artist is able to communicate this vision to his fellow men. Thus it is said that the artist is the priest of the Godhead and the teacher of mankind.[5]

This notion of basic continuity gave to Grundtvig's thought a unique sort of coherence which contrasts strongly with Kierkegaard's chasm between the real and the ideal. Grundtvig maintained that unless there is continuity between the natural and the religious, the religious is invalid. The specific terms in Grundtvig's writings for this thought are the investigation of the relationship between "the characteristically human" (det menneskelige) and "the distinctively Christian" (det kristelige).[1]

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[1] G. W. F. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of History, trans. J. Sibree (London: Henry G. Bohn, York Street, Covent Garden, 1861),477.

[2] Grundtvig, in Koch, 32.

[3] Grundtvig, Vaerker, II, Danne-Virke I, "Om det philosophiske Aarhundrede," 178.

[4] Grundtvig, in Koch, 14.

[5] Allen, 15.

Grundtvig's proposition in its classic form was made in the first two lines of his poem of 1837:

> Man first, then Christian,
> This alone is life's order;
> We may be called sheep, but do not think
> Of animals to be herded! . . . .
>
> Man first, then Christian,
> That is the capital point,
> Christianity costs us nothing,
> Is a pure stroke of luck,
> But luck which can only happen
> To one at bottom God's friend,
> One of truth's noble race.
>
> Let each upon this earth then strive
> True man to be,
> Open his ear to the word of truth
> And render God his glory!
> If Christianity be truth's way
> And he is not a Christian today,
> He will be by tomorrow.[2]

It is important to understand what Grundtvig meant by the formulation, "Man first, then Christian." This became later the basis for his educational views. Grundtvig did not mean that he considered the human to be self-sufficient and to include within itself the quality of eternal life. Nor did he mean to say that before a man could become Christian he must have attained a certain level of cultural, social, and spiritual attainment. Rather, what Grundtvig did mean was that a man must have the life-instinct within him before it can do any good to tell him about eternal life. Or, in other words, that man is a divine experiment which unites both spirit and matter, and that, such being the case, man must become conscious of himself as a whole--material as well as spiritual, emotions as well as intellect--before he can begin to understand reality.

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[1] Harry Aronson, Manskligt och Kristet: En Studie i Grundtvigs teologi (Stockholm: Svenske Bokforlaget, Bonniers, 1960), 294.

[2] Grundtvig, Vaerker, VIII, 113, 114, 115.

Reality is spirit, for Grundtvig. This is so, he believes, because history reveals that spirit unites and inspires, not only the individual consciousness, as we have seen above, but also peoples, _Volk_. The Greek, the Latin, the German, and the Scandinavian peoples each exhibit the influence of a _Volkgeist_ through national history and mother tongue. In the following chapter we shall trace the application of this conception to social organization and ecclesiastical polity. It should be remarked that this conception of _Geist_, in the Herder-Hegelian idealistic tradition, suffers from the standard idealist ambivalence. The _Geist_ is real only as incarnate, but the incarnate form in turn constrains the _Geist_.

We have seen in this section how Grundtvig's thoughts on the nature of reality were connected with practical human themes as well as suggestive of theological presuppositions. Grundtvig never separates his view of spirit from the generally religious and specifically Christian tradition in which he worked. Grundtvig does not speculate on the abstract problems which were raised by some of his formulations, preferring instead to treat his key doctrines as discoveries and putting them to immediate practical use in the social context.

5. Ethics

The consideration of ethical principles is always important because of the important role they play in the development of the theory of society. Grundtvig's ethical principles are theological within the Lutheran tradition. As such it does not seem necessary to explain the features of this theological moral code.

At the time of his illicit passion for Constance Leth, mentioned above, Grundtvig spoke of his own condition as one of "total disharmony" due in part to his "continuous grinding from my inner strictness."[1] Therefore, he turned from the strict orthodoxy of his upbringing for a short while to the consolation or guidance of idealistic ethics. Specifically he read Fichte's book, Die Bestimung des Menschen, which had a great affect upon him.[2]

Fichte wrote that his goal was to forcibly draw the reader away from the sensual to the super-sensual:[3]

> Man is not a product of the world of sense, and his being's final goal cannot be reached in that world. His destiny transcends time and space and everything sensual. What he is, and to what he shall mold himself, that he must know. As his destiny is lofty, so must his thought also be able to rise above all sensual barriers. That he must do. Where the home of his being is, there will his thought necessarily be also, and the most truly human, to him the only worthy attitude, the one in which his whole power of thought unfolds,

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[1] Grundtvig, in Koch, 28, 29.

[2] Windelband, II, 570.

[3] Ibid., 595.

> is the one in which he rises above all his barriers, the one whereby all that is sensual is converted for him into pure nothingness, into a mere reflection in mortal eyes of the non-sensual which alone exists.[1]

Fichte's moral science greatly appealed to Grundtvig in his troubled condition, and it remained a significant element in his thinking, although, as we shall see, subordinate to theological considerations. In response to and agreement with Fichte, Grundtvig wrote:

> First must I then with bold hand lift the veil that rests over the holy of holies, source of the intuition . . . . Only when I become sensible of the intuited can I separate it from her in whom alone it has so long existed for me, and my own soul become its expression.[2]

What Grundtvig desired was "the union between my inner being and the most high," by means of which he could experience "a satisfaction which leaves the finite farther and farther behind."[3] However, Grundtvig was convinced, this inner union within the self was not self-produced:

> I dare not credit myself with the centrifugal force to be able to rise above all so that my life in the higher idea will be unbroken, constant, but at this moment I am looking down on her as a creature wholly isolated from me and from my craving. I look about me. No one can fill her place, but I do not demand that it be filled. In this there is no resignation, no renunciation of passion. The earth rolls away under me, I float where previously I stood, and rise by my own power toward the beckoning height . . . . Heavenly thought, intoxicated not as with drink but with too great bliss I clasp thee to my bosom. So shall all that is finite be cleansed of everything that sullied it, or become identical with its own pure archetype.[4]

The "pure archetype" as well as the conception of "life in the higher idea" are indications of the idealist tradition of ethical thought, a tradition in which the particular individual is not essential but accidental in some sense, at least to the extent that the individual is completed in some larger unit such as the state or the church.

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[1] Fichte, in Koch, 28.

[2] Grundtvig, in Koch, 28.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

The larger unit Grundtvig chose as the source and the association for ethical principles and behavior was the church. On the personal basis of his unhappy love affair, Grundtvig believed that the Fall of man was an indispensable consideration in any complete ethical theory. The Fall was the result of natural man's inability to live up to the demands made by a strict code of morality.[1] Even the naturalists of the time believed that some kind of great misfortune had befallen man very early which had put the earthly in him out of joint with the heavenly, time out of harmony with eternity.[2] The difference between the naturalists and Grundtvig on this point was that the naturalists termed this great misfortune "an error," while Grundtvig termed it "a sin," and considered it more a failure of will than a mistake in the understanding.

When it comes to the question of how the damage of the Fall is to be repaired, Grundtvig answers that the life-urge, when awakened, was not capable in itself of re-integrating the human personality into a full and happy unity. The Fall had, in his belief, caused human nature to become depraved so that any cure was fundamentally impossible. The only way to counter the effect of the Fall was by baptism. Baptism, according to Grundtvig, was the form of regeneration through which the believer would be spiritually transformed. Such a formulation is in accord, as can be readily seen, with standard Christian dogma, the only point of divergence being not too obvious, namely that the Fall, while leading to the moral depravity of the human race, did not lead to such mental depravity that the human race was not intellectually aware of its condition. Thus, while Grundtvig's theological views did determine his ethical view to the greatest extent, yet the point of contact with idealism which was mentioned earlier was also significant, and, in the case of the Fall where Grundtvig did not include the mind in his ascription of depravity, idealism was a moderating influence upon the theological views themselves.

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[1] Grundtvig, Vaerker, VI, Den christelige Børnelaerdom, 100.

[2] Koch, 142.

We can see that this brief review of Grundtvig's ethical theory indicates that for him the strict observance of a moral code was conceived as a tool or a step on the way from creation to salvation, a negative step or protagonist in the process. The stern moral code is one of the most common impressions which one receives from Grundtvig's writings, a strictness dominating not only personal life but also the judgments upon history and current society.[1]

However, it is important to keep in mind the fact that Grundtvig never abandoned his belief in the continuity between the human and the religious. Many of the values he perceived in society derived from his idea of the fundamental continuity and unity in the universe. The discontinuity implied in the theological doctrine of the Fall becomes subordinate to the doctrine of baptism, in Grundtvig's view, the sacrament providing the proper means whereby the fundamental continuity of life can be fully restored. The individual, then, who like Grundtvig, encounters a strict moral code which he cannot keep on his own resources turns to the realization that baptism and the fellowship of the church complete the individual. The proper unit for the increase of value is thus the group rather than the individual.

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[1] Grundtvig, Vaerker, II, Kirkens Gienmaele, 317 ff.

CHAPTER V

THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF N. F. S. GRUNDTVIG

Interpreters of Grundtvig have generally concentrated their attention on one portion of his social thought rather than investigating the general principles underlying his social thought as a whole. Thus there are fine studies of his educational theory,[1] his view of history,[2] and his doctrine of the church,[3] but there is no synthetic view of his social thought as a whole. The aim of this chapter will be to view Grundtvig's social theories as a whole with the hope of tracing those common principles which underlie the particular sections of his philosophy of society.

It is the thesis of this chapter that Grundtvig applied the concept of spirit or Geist which had been developed by the idealists, such as Herder and Hegel, to ecclesiastical polity and social organization. According to Grundtvig, the spirit is manifested in the mother-tongue and the fatherland. The word, or communication, through the mother-tongue is the most important medium of contact between people. It is through language, that the nation's life and culture, which are part of life in creation, are imparted to individual persons. The basis for

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[1] K. E. Bugge, Skolen for Livet (forsvaret for den teologiske doktorgrad ved Københavns Universitet, 1965).

[2] William Michelsen, Tilblivelsen af Grundtvigs historiesyn (København: Gyldendal, 1954).

[3] Holger Begtrup, Grundtvigs Danske Kristendom (København: Gads Forlag, 1936).

Grundtvig's social thought suffers from the ambivalence which is common to other idealist systems, namely, the contradictory assertions that (1) the spirit is real only as incarnate, and (2) that the incarnate form constrains and limits spirit. In contrast to Kierkegaard, Grundtvig's assumptions are holistic, so that the national spirit rather than the individual spirit is the most significant subject and the locus of social value.

1. The Concept of Spirit

Our thesis is that Grundtvig applied the concept of spirit as developed by such idealists as Herder and Hegel to ecclesiastical polity and social organization. Therefore, let us summarize the positions of the idealists named.

i. The Concept of Spirit according to Herder.--Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803) was convinced that existence had a spiritual purpose. In his book, Ideas for the Philosophy of History of Mankind (1784),[1] he offers a historical-cultural interpretation, to the effect that humanity is progressively marching toward civilization and spiritual fulfillment. As man masters his physical environment, his higher spiritual powers find their expression in social institutions, science, philosophy, art, poetry, and religion. Thereupon nature reveals its deeper meaning, directing the soul toward God. Grundtvig, as we shall see, similarly devoted a great deal of attention tracing what he considered to be the progressive march revealed through the study of history.

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[1] Windelband, II, 446.

ii. The Concept of Spirit according to Hegel.--Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) was fundamentally convinced that the Kantian issue between nature and spirit must be reasoned out, and that spirit always expresses the rational essence of reality.[1] Hegel ends the Phenomenology of the Spirit by saying:

> The goal, absolute knowledge, or spirit knowing itself as spirit, has for its way the recollection of the spirits . . . . Their preservation, as free existence appearing in the form of the accidental, is history; but as comprehended organization it is the science of the appearance of knowledge.[2]

All that is real is the manifestation of Geist, spirit or mind.[3] The world is a development of those principles which form the content of the divine mind, the Geist, the Idea, or God. The "Objective Spirit" is the active living body of individuals which forms their source of spiritual life. The state, according to Hegel, is the realization of the ethical idea, the spirit of the people become visible. The state is surpassed only by art, religion, and science, which press forward to the Absolute Spirit. Hegel's ethics is the social realization of personality.

In the Philosophy of History Hegel follows the concepts employed by Herder, saying that beneath historical studies of specific events could be discerned the pattern of inner meaning and increasing purpose. Thus Hegel wrote: "The history of the world is nothing but the development of the Idea of Freedom."[1]

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[1] Ibid., 613.

[2] Hegel, quoted in Walter Kaufmann, Hegel: a Reinterpretation (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1966), 147.

[3] Windelband, II, 611.

This brief summary will indicate the similarities which obtain between the idealistic tradition and Grundtvig's own social thought, as we turn now to his works.

iii. The Concept of Spirit according to Grundtvig.--The study of history, in Grundtvig's view, was the proper way to trace the course of spirit as evidenced by the enfolding development of human history. This involves a dynamic conception of the living word which indicates the word to be the spirit's vehicle of revelation. On this theory, as we shall see, freedom in church and state is based on the primacy of spirit.[2] The concept of spirit for Grundtvig provides intelligibility to the interplay of thought and action which is the characteristic of the development of human history. As Grundtvig defined his use of the concept of spirit, he wrote:

> Spirit is a higher power of life which finds its living expression in adequate oral words which become its earthly habitus in which the spirit, as it were, may lie dormant a long time only to awaken anew, in due season, and prove its consistent unity by revivifying and preserving its expression, and, in general, prove the same by repeating its former work of creative greatness in a new and clearer fashion.[3]

By saying that spirit is a "higher power of life," Grundtvig means that in the continuity which stretches from inanimate matter through human beings to divine beings and God, spirit represents the animate and vital portion of the continuum. Spirit is that which knows the perfect and the divine, and spirit is the divine. Grundtvig states that the "living expression" of the spirit is the spoken word. The written word, the published word, is dead or spiritless, in Grundtvig's view.[1] It is through the spoken word that the spirit is communicated and awakened and proven. The "consistent unity" of spirit is shown when it repeats its former greatness in some new way.

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[1] G. W. F. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of History, 476.

[2] Ernest D. Nielsen, N. F. S. Grundtvig: An American Study (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1955), viii.

[3] Grundtvig, Vaerker, IV, Nordens Mythologi, 51.

Grundtvig's conception of spirit provides the basis for the correct understanding of his social thought in general, which we shall document in detail in the following sections. Grundtvig conceived of the folk-spirit as expressed in the language of the people. The folk-spirit, in his view, was the key feature in civic life.

> A folk without a mother-tongue is like a king without a kingdom. Both are equally poorly served. Their dominions are on paper . . . . A spiritless language in the people's mouth reflects a powerless sceptre in the king's hands. This is no great secret, for it is the public spirit that makes a kingdom strong, and the mother-tongue which is the body and life-expression of all natural folk. No kingdom will blossom if the mother-tongue rules in less than its best and most powerful form.[2]

The folk-spirit, expressed through the living language of the people, is intimately connected with the human spirit as expressed through history. Let us turn at this point to consider in more detail the manner in which Grundtvig applies his conception of spirit to ecclesiastical polity and social organization.

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[1] Grundtvig, Vaerker, IV, Nordens Mythologi, 48.

[2] Grundtvig, Vaerker, IV, Det Danske Fiir-Klover eller Danskheden, Partisk Betragtet, 180.

2. The Spirit in the Church

Hegel had said, "The history of the world is nothing but the development of the Idea of Freedom." As if deliberately trying to prove the truth of that sentence, Grundtvig laboriously developed a theory of freedom for the church that depended upon his conception of spirit. Life, he believed, was ultimately a question of spirit, and thus must be permitted to develop through strife, since battle is the spirit's present form of manifestation.[1]

As we have noted, Grundtvig's conviction that freedom is necessary was laboriously developed. It derived from his feeling that he must reform the church as it existed, and his belief in freedom was the result of his varied experiences in attempting to reform the church.

As we have seen in the biographical sketch in the preceding chapter, Grundtvig felt in 1810 that he had a strong call to be a reformer. This entailed the presuppositions that such social restructuring was desirable, possible, and necessary. Grundtvig's inner conflicts, however, kept him from acting directly upon this conviction until fifteen years had elapsed. It was not until 1825 that he launched the attack upon Clausen. We can see that Grundtvig's theory of church reform passed through four phases.

(1) The first phase, indicated by his attack upon Clausen, was that the church should be purified. The way to accomplish this

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[1] Grundtvig, Vaerker, IV, Nordens Mythologi, 9.

purification was by throwing out the heretics, and the first was to have been Clausen. It will be recalled that Grundtvig failed in this attempt, and the failure convinced him that his theory was mistaken.

The basis for his interest in reform was his theory of the foundation of the church. Specifically, Grundtvig had concluded that we

> find the foundational concept of Christianity exclusively in the Christian Church, furthermore, we find it in its definitive and living form only in our common Christian confession of faith in which we baptize.[1]

This rather cryptic statement means that the spirit in the church is known by spiritual means. In other words, the spirit, being an animating and vivifying power, does not translate itself into a dead foundation for the church. The Scriptures, being one such dead source, in Grundtvig's view, are not an adequate foundation for the living body of believers which is the church. The reason for this is that the written word is inanimate as compared with the spoken word. Grundtvig wrote on this point:

> I stumbled upon the truth that we do not find the Church in the Scripture, but the Scripture in the Church, and that we do not stand upon the book in order to search for the faith, but stand upon the faith and read the book. We do not place the Bible under the table, which stands best upon its own legs, but we place the book of the Lord upon the table of the Lord in order that all who commune may know and observe the proper, Christian procedure.[2]

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[1] Grundtvig, in Nielsen, 83.

[2] Grundtvig, in Nielsen, 78.

Thus the church came before the Bible, and therefore could not have been founded upon it. The Bible was merely a record, a dead word, whereas the church was a living structure with a living word. This living word was its means of transmission from generation to generation. The living word was the proof of the presence of spirit, and its absence was the proof of spiritlessness.

The living word which Grundtvig believed to be so important was the mother-tongue of the people. The living word must also be an integral part of the practice of the contemporary congregation. What Grundtvig believed to satisfy these considerations was what he called the "matchless discovery," namely the Apostles' Creed as recited by the congregation at the time of baptism. This is what he termed "the word of our Lord's own mouth," and what he believed to be the invincible and infallible foundation of the church.[1]

The implications of these ideas are important. The church as the congregation of believers was freed from the guardianship of scholars, theologians, and exegetes, such as, for example, Professor Clausen. Grundtvig wrote: "I do not derive the Christian faith from the Bible, but I take it where I find it in its clearest and most precise form, namely, in the Church.[2] Since the confessing congregation provides the clearest evidence to Grundtvig of the truth of the faith, it follows that, in his view, the technical study of the scriptures in the ancient tongue and of theological doctrines in their complexities is not relevant to the question of the truth of the faith. He wrote: "The word-of-faith is the Spirit's living voice according to which the letter of the Scripture is to be interpreted and explained."[1]

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[1] Grundtvig, *Vaerker*, II, *Kirkens Gienmaele*,318.

[2] Grundtvig, in Nielsen, 97.

In other words, the normative element in religion is faith, and faith is to be found, as we have seen, in the contemporary and confessing congregation which affirms the Apostles' Creed as the baptismal covenant. Theology is derivative, based upon the practice of scholarship rather than upon participation in the spirit of the church. Thus "theology is not an article of faith."[2] Grundtvig distinguishes sharply between faith and theology.

Therefore, the theologians were not the lords of the church, but merely teachers in the church's school. Historical criticism could not shake the foundation of the church. The theologians could never attain certainty in any case, since the learned scholars were always in disagreement. One must always wait to discover which of the conflicting opinions would prove to be correct. Theologians could never be custodians of the belief of laymen. The church was not a reading-circle, but a society of believers. The congregation, not the Bible, was the body of Christ.

(2) The second phase of Grundtvig's theory of church reform was the result of the dismal failure of his attack upon Clausen. This second phase was the belief that the church should be purified not by

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[1] *Ibid.*, 96.

[2] *Ibid.*, 85.

the forcible expulsion of the rationalists but by peacefully allowing them to withdraw.[1]

No doubt his change of mind was caused, at least in part, by the ironic situation that the party in danger of expulsion from the church was not the rationalists but the orthodox. The rationalists were in control of the machinery of ecclesiastical administration at the time, and their policies governed parish life strictly, to the point that unauthorized hymns or other departures from the liturgy were forbidden. Smarting from such restraints and unwilling, in this second phase, to impose similar restraints on others, Grundtvig wished freedom to be allowed within the state church. Freedom, at this stage, was interpreted as being freedom for the rationalistic ministers to leave, and for Grundtvig and those like-minded to form free congregations--free from the restraint of the parish bond--within the state church.

Grundtvig believed there was a split in the church which could only be repaired when the contending parties were no longer forced to remain together. Religious freedom, thus conceived, was the solution: let those who do not wish to be Christians be permitted to withdraw outright from any religious community.

Grundtvig thus began to question the existing order in which a state-guaranteed church, in turn, supported the policies of the state.

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[1] Grundtvig, Vaerker, III, Om den Clausenske Injurie-Sag, 296.

(3) The third phase in Grundtvig's theory of church reform will be seen as a direct extension of the second. In this phase he demanded the loosening of the parish bond. He argued that, contrary to the law at the time, a citizen should be allowed to seek the services of any minister willing to help him, rather than being limited to his own particular parish priest.

Grundtvig no longer agitated for the expulsion of those he considered heretics, nor did he any longer contend that they should withdraw from the church. Rather, he concluded that if believers were free to choose their religious leaders within the state church, the unwelcome constraint against conscience would be removed. Thus he wrote Religious Freedom in 1827,[1] arguing that creeds such as the Augsburg confession, despite their excellence, are man-made, and that in addition a certain number of priests tended to remain where they did not belong, whether from weakness or other reasons. Therefore, it would surely be most useful to the state church if more freedom for priests and laymen to seek meaningful association were allowed.

Initially, Grundtvig thought that the dissolution of the parish bond should mean doctrinal freedom but liturgical constraint. Soon, however, he realized that this would be only half a dissolution, since

> any honest man can neither grant or accept freedom to openly contradict himself, nor can I think of anything more shocking to a pious mind than to hear a priest conduct the baptismal or the communion service in words which are plainly contrary to the doctrine he expounds in the pulpit, to his confirmation candidates, and for his catechumens.[2]

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[1] Grundtvig, Vaerker, III, Om Religions-Frihed, 2.

[2] Grundtvig, in Koch, 175.

The legislation necessary for the initiation of Grundtvig's reforms was passed on April 5, 1855. Under this legislation, called the Sognebaandsløsning, the "loosening of the parish bond,"[1] a member of the state church could affiliate with any other parish regardless of his own residence. The character of many churches changed, becoming less community-minded and more spiritual centers of new constituencies.

(4) The fourth phase in Grundtvig's theory of church reform was his statement that the state church was a civil institution. Thus was implied his belief that inclusion and the lack of compulsion were required for the existence of the state church.[2] It can be seen how Grundtvig's theory of church reform as it had developed culminated in this view. That is to say, the freedom he thought necessary for priests and believers was so broad that only the theory of the church as a civil institution could explain why such diverse religious beliefs should be grouped together in one state church. Grundtvig wrote in a letter to a friend, Professor Sibbern:

> A Christian State Church is simply and purely a juridicial nomenclature which does not possess the slightest Christian reality, and is only spiritually tolerable when its compulsion is limited to a certain degree of "external discipline" for the sake of civil order, but grants such freedom to both faith and doctrine as is consonant with their gracious and spiritual nature.[3]

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[1] Nielsen, 136.

[2] J. Knudsen, Danish Rebel (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955), 78.

[3] Grundtvig, in Nielsen, 141.

In The Danish State Church Impartially Viewed (1834)[1] Grundtvig wrote that Christianity is an unalterable fact from times past, but that the state church is an "establishment" which the government has license to turn and twist at will, provided that the government does not encroach upon the freedom of conscience:

> The State Church is not a Church State, but simply an establishment enacted by the State which the government has the right to dissolve or change according to its own decisions, and no bishop, pastor or professor has any right to murmur as long as there is no infringement of the freedom of conscience which is both fundamental to all religion and every non-disqualified citizen's inalienable right.[2]

Grundtvig's thought is that although the state church is only a civil institution, the true church of Jesus Christ may abide in it as a guest. All that may reasonably be demanded of the state church is that it provide good living conditions for the true church. The true church is a spiritual folk-life which exists in living interaction with the specific development of the people and the people's mother tongue.[3] The state church is a civil framework which is essentially non-religious in character.

Grundtvig demanded church freedom because he believed it necessary to secure freedom for the spirit and the word to work within the church. It can be noted that this demand for freedom was not for individual expression of belief. Freedom for the Volkgeist in no way implies individual freedom of dissent. Individualism for Grundtvig is merely isolation, and is thus less than human. The religious community is the proper vehicle of the spiritual life.

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[1] Grundtvig, Vaerker, III, Den danske Stats-Kirke upartisk betragtet, 313.

[2] Ibid., 357.

[3] Grundtvig, Christianity's Pleiads: A churchly Saga-Song, in Koch, 159.

Grundtvig was convinced that in the world of the spirit it was the word, not force, which held sway. Command and compulsion were useless for waging war in the spiritual realm.

3. The Spirit in the Nation

As he applied the concept of spirit to ecclesiastical polity, so did Grundtvig also apply that concept to social organization. The basic unity and integrity of his position is indicated by the consideration that living Christianity must, in his view, always be national and expressed through the mother tongue. The nation is, in Hegelian terms, a Volkgeist. Every leading people expresses a leading tendency of human nature. The Scandinavian peoples, Grundtvig believed, exhibited their distinct characteristic in this manner:

> Nowhere has there existed a naturally deeper sense of the marvellous kinship between heaven and earth or a more heartfelt desire to see the whole great marvellous life of man gradually develop and explain itself.[1]

The "folk," or people, were unified by language and cultural traditions which in turn are based upon mythological characteristics, that is, mythologies which reveal the nature of reality as the combination of historical and natural forces in a unique manner.

Grundtvig's ideas can be illustrated by referring to his book, Christianity's Pleiads: a churchly Saga-Song. He argues that there is a close inner connection between a people's national life and its religious life. In antiquity, three distinct national churches had appeared: the Hebrew, the Greek, and the Latin. Three new ones were added in the Middle Ages, corresponding to three new language communities: the English, the German, and the Northern (Scandinavian). This development Grundtvig saw as having been prophesied in the book of Revelation, where, as he read it, the letters to the seven churches were a survey of the principal churches yet to be, the sixth of which--the church at Philadelphia--was the Scandinavian. The Christian life, he believed, was a spiritual folk-life which stands in a living reciprocal relationship to the distinctive development and the mother tongue of the various leading peoples:

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[1] Grundtvig, in Koch, 148.

> It then naturally follows that the Christian confession, preaching, and songs of praise, which are the Christian people's only plain life-tokens, can neither be purer, warmer, nor clearer than the people's mother tongue, with the result that the people's mother tongue, like the evangel, which brings nothing with it except "the Lord in the Spirit" affects life expression and enlightenment through the years.[1]

In Grundtvig's opinion, every people's mother tongue corresponds to its national horizon and stage of development. It can be appreciated that this idea of the mother tongue being involved in the spiritual development of a people is significant. The language evolves from the life-experience of individuals and is then the means for the formation and the communication of concepts.[2]

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[1] *Ibid*., 115.

[2] It is interesting to remark on the fact that the Moslems refuse to allow the *Koran* to be translated from the Arabic officially (for religious use), thus not permitting it to enter into the process of language formation and alteration.

Only speech in the mother tongue spiritually touches our hearts, according to Grundtvig. Therefore, the tongues of the spirit spoke the mother tongue of each listener on the day of Pentecost. Living Christianity has never brought its own language with it, but rather borrows the mother tongue of the people it visits. This, he believed, is a fact insufficiently noted in history.[1] Thus, the Christian church, although it had been foreign in origin, had become Danish in thought and speech:

> In the North now we understand better
> Than a song handed down from our fathers
> The high symbolic language of the East.
> Our mother tongue bows low,
> Nimbly and gracefully follows
> The line of thought of the Lord.
>
> The word of the Lord and Pentecost--
> Which alone explain the matter--
> Gave you all the spirit of tongues:
> The spirit which can do all,
> Which in Christ Jesus' Church
> Loosens all bonds on the tongue.[2]

These examples have been ecclesiastical in tone and context, but Grundtvig believed that the spirit manifested in the national folk-life was one with the spirit manifested in the church. The classic location in his works for the explanation of the interrelationship between the national and the religious is the poem, "For Self-Examination," written in 1848.[3] The context of the conclusion of the poem is that one should renounce everything which might possibly obstruct the way to the spiritual goal, whether such obstruction may be books or children or whatever. As one section puts the sentiment:

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[1] Grundtvig, in Koch, 160.

[2] *Ibid.*, 161.

[3] Grundtvig, *Vaerker*, VIII, *Selvprøvelse*, 278.

> Yes, to renounce oneself, that is the thing,
> That reaches bottom, divides Soul from Mind;[1]
> That should we all do, yet no one can,
> Who has not hidden in the Savior's hand.
> See, that is love's sacred puzzle!
> See, that is deity's grace before grace![2]

Having considered the possible renunciations required of one serious about the religious life, Grundtvig looked over the poem some days later and made this addition:

> But--would not God have our whole hearts,
> Despite mother and father and wife!
> Should I not willingly sacrifice the Danish
> To perfect a Christian life!
> Could I and would I for the Savior's glory
> Danishness on earth willingly forego?
>
> No, not willingly, that I must confess,
> Though I believe Jesus is all to me;
> Nowhere on earth could I turn,
> If all the Danish days were done;
> Awaiting the Lord in heaven
> Purified, finding the explanation of the eternal.[3]

What Grundtvig means is that if he is to live on the earth, he must live as a Dane. If he cannot, then there is only one thing remaining for him--to await eternal life in the purely spiritual state. To live as a human being involves, in Grundtvig's view, living as a part of a group, the folk. One of the characterizing elements of the folk, within the cultural heritage which we have spoken of, is the language.

It is important to note that the native language of a folk is the expression of the "word." By the "word," Grundtvig means the spiritual and intangible element of speech as opposed to the written word. A living conception of spirit can only be communicated by the word. It is a mistake, according to Grundtvig, to speak of the printed word, for the printed word does not exist; that is, it is not the "word," properly speaking.[1] What are printed are not words, but symbols of words.

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[1] Aand, mind or spirit.

[2] Grundtvig, Vaerker, VIII, 281.

[3] Ibid., 281, 282.

> The word proceeds from the mouth, not from the pen; it is therefore, indeed, not with the hand but with the mouth that we succinctly and tersely, clearly and lively, express, communicate, and propagate our thoughts and feelings, faith and philosophy . . . . As already stated, it does not help one iota, even if I were to require the confession of the reader that the spoken, oral word is both primary and most natural and that even the Iliad was heard long before it was read, for if he does not possess a living conception of the incomparable power and glory of the eloquent word as it mounts upward on wings of the voice in contrast to its adumbration on paper, then I may perhaps be of service to him at some other time, but I cannot help him here, and he may as well close the book now as later, since, seriously speaking, he does not understand a word of what it says.[2]

The word in this sense is important for all the spirited and significant historical events which are thus evidenced as the work of the spirit in history.

> It is plainly clear that if we were to imagine the world to be without the living, creative, oral word, then our world would be, in consequence, without Moses and all the prophets, Christ and the Apostles, Greece, England, the ancient North, and Luther himself, and now, I placidly ask: "What would history, what would we, and what would human life be without these; yes, what, in our imagination, would we become if these voices were silenced?[3]

The human spirit and the folk-spirit, in Grundtvig's view, are expressed through history. If it is asked precisely how this is the case, the precise nature of the connection between spirit and history, between the spirit and the material, Grundtvig would claim that such a connection could not be explained with intellectual precision. That is, what he termed _den intellektuelle Anskuelse_,[1] intellectual opinion or intuition, is inadequate to describe reality as a whole. It is not, he believed, by means of precise intellectual and conceptual elucidation, but rather by the search for life-giving and spirit-infusing patterns in history that reality is comprehended.

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[1] Grundtvig, Vaerker, IV, Nordens Mythologi, 53.

[2] Ibid., 44.

[3] Grundtvig, in Nielsen, 150.

He saw these patterns as characteristically social rather than individual. Man finds consciousness of himself in the social context, according to Grundtvig, in the borderline between the visible and the invisible worlds where civil society moves. Grundtvig's political theory is the expression of his philosophy of spirit and his own experience of the nature of man. As such, it provides another instance of the close intertwining of idealism with nineteenth century nationalism, such as was the case with Herder and Hegel. Grundtvig wrote that civil society constituted "the prerequisite condition for the higher development of the individual and the progressive evolution of the race."[2]

Grundtvig was intensely interested in whether civil society worked well or badly. He wrote that whenever law and justice, freedom and order are violated, the state ceases to constitute a civil society.[3]

> Whence the cry for freedom? Does it come from men in bonds and shackles which must be unloosened or from the unbridled that must be restrained by greater checks? Indeed, it would be

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[1] _Ibid_., 157.

[2] Grundtvig, _Vaerker_, V, _Haandbog i Verdens-Historien_, 187.

[3] _Ibid_., 128.

> equally foolish to sacrifice the necessary freedom, which life demands, for lifeless order. On the contrary, we must daily improve in learning how to make freedom and order work together for the common good.[1]

The state should ideally grant "all the liberty and equality for which the people justly ask."[2] Civil society functions badly "when law becomes dormant, impudence is astir, where civil rights are lost, tyranny rules, and when peace is lost, war begins."[3] Grundtvig's view of justice as order, the idea that when both freedom and order are kept in the proper relationship then growth and life are furthered, is reminiscent of Plato. The highest social value is life, which has to be lived in freedom so that it will have the greatest possibility of developing to the limit of its natural capabilities.

The fundamental law of a free society, Grundtvig believed, is the overthrow of tyranny.[4] Tyranny was defined by Grundtvig as the wrongful seizure of the power of office. Whenever someone succeeds "in placing himself above the law he does not stop, if he has the power, until he tramples all justice under foot."[5]

Freedom might be easily misunderstood if we do not make clear that Grundtvig was concerned with civil liberties in the sense of freedom for the development of the folk, not with individual freedoms. He was interested in the fullest possible development of spirit, and this development did not require freedom for the individual as such. Grundtvig did not conceive of freedom as the opportunity to do as one desires, but, instead, as the absence of state compulsion in matters of belief. In the draft of one of his lectures at Borch's College, Grundtvig wrote of listeners and speakers:

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[1] Grundtvig, in Nielsen, 129.

[2] Grundtvig, Vaerker, V, Haandbog i Verdens-Historien, 42.

[3] Ibid. [4] Ibid., 390. [5] Ibid., 167.

> Freedom on both sides is the basic requirement; but this holds good not only at this one point, but in the whole realm of spirit, since freedom is the spirit's element, whereby its living reality stands or falls, has its beginning and end. Only in drawing freedom's breath do we feel bold and glad and light, able to live and to suffer.[1]

Again, put in the poetic form which Grundtvig thought so effective:

> Scot-free shall be
> Among heroes here in the North
> Thoughts and words alike
> However deep they may cut.[2]

Grundtvig's view of freedom was social, and he therefore attacked

> the notion that there is no freedom of any value except the freedom of the soul, which depends upon the power of the Spirit, the love of truth, and clear apprehension, and that, therefore, civil liberty is far from necessary, yes not even desirable, since as the great Plato has explained, the "wise and the best" ought to rule unhindered and discipline the rest which must blindly follow in order to become, if at all possible, as one of them.[3]

Freedom from state compulsion was necessary in order that dissent and strife, the mode by which spirit develops, would not be artificially stifled. Grundtvig arrived at this view, as we have seen, by the extension of his developing theory of freedom within the church to civil society:

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[1] Grundtvig, in Koch, 129.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Grundtvig, in Nielsen, 129.

Compulsory belief is random talk,
Shrewd is the heart in self-defense,
Compulsory shamming, like the Roman yoke,
Compels but unto lies and sin;
Only to hell can one be driven,
To heaven one must be rung,
The spirit of truth follows freedom.[1]

Grundtvig had begun initially by advocating freedom for belief in religious matters, progressing from there to freedom for thought in political matters. Gradually he included, as well, freedom for education, freedom of association, and freedom for the press. Thus, beginning with the church, Grundtvig ended by comprehending the whole of civic and social life in his demand for freedom. Freedom was based on the requirements of the spirit, and was oriented toward the social as opposed to the individual.

Grundtvig advocated the individual's experience of community. This is indicated by the common characteristic of the enormous number of hymns which he wrote. They are churchly or congregational in character, not "I-hymns" but "we-hymns." There is next to nothing in them of the personal in the sense of expressing purely personal experiences and drawing the poet's own thoughts and feelings into the foreground. Thus Grundtvig wrote in a letter that the

> principal fault of our fathers which we as their children must strive to correct, was their desire to negotiate with the Savior each for himself and possess him, something which will never do, as among other things, "our Father" should have taught them.[2]

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[1] Grundtvig, in Koch, 128.

[2] Ibid., 194, 195.

Again, in another letter written while planning a hymn pamphlet for the Vartov congregation in 1843, Grundtvig said that he had little room for the devotional hymns,

> namely that which each of us oftenest hums to himself and prefers to sing with a few good friends. For the main thing here is first the church, baptism and communion, and secondly our church festivals and church gatherings as a whole.[1]

Thus the social grouping, distinguished by language and traditions, is the expression of the spirit. The individual participates in the common nature of mankind, of Denmark, and of the church. His proper fulfillment comes in this participation in a larger group, not in his individuality as such.

Therefore, in his so-called "freedom manifesto" in the epistle-in-rhyme prefacing the Northern Mythology,[2] Grundtvig indicates that his demand for freedom is not based on the belief that man is a world-citizen with eternal rights, that all men are equal, but rather that his demand is based on one particular view of human life and of the laws which govern it, namely, that life is ultimately a question of spirit. Because life is spirit, in this sense, it must be permitted to develop through strife, since battle is the spirit's present form of manifestation.

If civil society allows life to be lived in freedom, then life will have the greater possibility of developing to the limit of its natural capabilities. The means for the realization of the goal--of allowing the free development of life--will, therefore, be education, which we shall discuss in the next section.

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[1] *Ibid*., 195.

[2] Grundtvig, *Vaerker*, IV, 9.

4. The Spirit in the School

Grundtvig believed that good education was education which allowed the spirit to develop freely, as it was meant to develop naturally. Bad education was education which hindered the development of the spirit. The spirit was developed through the awakening of the folk-spirit. Thus the native language and the myths of the people were the two most fruitful means for the proper education of the people, the awakening of their folk-spirit. Grundtvig's designation of such education was "school for life," contrasted with "school for death."[1]

i. School for Death.--Grundtvig considered the schools of his time to be schools of death because they denied the natural living development of a child, forcing him into modes of instruction which were unnatural and unfruitful. The prevailing system of education, he wrote, made "the roses wither on a child's cheeks."[2]

> Spirit-destroying is any considerable brain-fag for the human being in childhood, before the brain with the rest of the body has attained proper development, and before life, inner as well as outer, has become so far familiar to us that we may recover it in the describing and feel a natural desire to be enlightened about its conditions. Therefore by seeking to implant the order and calm of age, its discretion and prudence, in children, we only innoculate

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[1] Grundtvig, Vaerker, IV, Skolen for Livet, 201.

[2] Grundtvig, in Koch, 136.

> them with the deadly infirmity of age in both soul and body; in many of them we destroy the life-force entirely, so that as half-grown boys they waste away like shadows, and in them all we are working to break down human nature by defying its laws.[1]

The key importance of the concept of spirit can be noted. It is sufficient indictment of the schools of the time, according to Grundtvig, to say that they are "spirit-destroying." Spirit, or it would also be appropriate in this context to say "spiritedness", should be the aim of the school program.

Grundtvig, therefore, protested against the arid book-worm attitude (Bogorme vaesen) which he saw as prevailing both in the Latin schools and in the mathematical Realskole.[2]

> The only good boys' school for civic life I can conceive of is the house of a capable and enterprising citizen, where boys may acquire both a liking for occupations they will later pursue and a grasp of them, whereas all confinement in scholastic houses of correction is simply their ruin for active civic life: innoculation for effeminacy, sloth, shiftlessness, book-worm habits, and all civic viles.[3]

As we shall see in the following section, Grundtvig had a somewhat more detailed plan for the proper education of the nation's youth than appears from the above passage. Here we note his strong criticisms of the existing schools. He called the Latin schools of the time "black schools,"[4] a phrase he employed with great effectiveness.[5]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] A. Pontoppidan Thyssen, Grundtvig Studier (København: Gyldendal, 1965), 116.

[3] Grundtvig, in Koch, 144.

[4] Grundtvig, Vaerker, IV, Den latinske Stil, 133.

[5] The Black School was initially a college of magical practices which was located in Wittenberg. The popular transferred it to the University of Paris and then to Salamanca.

"Black schools" were schools of death, Grundtvig believed, because they employed a dead language, Latin, in place of the native tongue of the country. They encouraged a lifeless order contrary to the natural requirements of life and developing spirit.

ii. The School for Life.--Grundtvig came to believe[1] that the proper task of the school is the awakening of the understanding that man is spirit and belongs to a people. To awaken this understanding is to place man face to face with reality. This is true enlightenment, Oplysning, as opposed to the false enlightenment, as Grundtvig saw it, and the task of the school is to bring about this true enlightenment. Thus he wrote, "What sunshine is to the black mold, true enlightenment is to the mold's kinsman."[2] Education is not primarily a scholarly matter. Rather, education is concerned with an awakening to the understanding of values in life, not with the inculcation of information. This enlightenment, if properly carried out, according to

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[1] Grundtvig's education theory underwent several phases of development. Up until 1808, his theory was primarily idealistic with the development of personality being the aim of education. In the second stage, 1808-1830, Christianity is taken to be the foundation and chief expression of the spiritual life. However, the spiritual life is also expressed through poetry, science (Videnskabelighed, science or scholarship), and the national achievements. The third stage, 1830 following, represents his fully developed educational theory. In 1832, with the publication of the Northern Mythology, there was the controversy over "Romano-Italian learning", mistaken in its effort to have reason rule over life, according to Grundtvig. Such a mistaken order of priority was the result of the Enlightenment which Grundtvig traced back to the Renaissance and to ancient Rome. In 1834, with the publication of The Danish State Church Impartially Considered, he protested against what he considered to be the socially subversive wilfulness produced by the Age of Reason. From 1836 to 1838 are found the most extensive writings on the schools.

[2] Grundtvig, in Koch, 137.

Grundtvig, would do away with the gap between the learned and the layman, as it would go to the center of everyday life:

Is light for the learned only
To spell out, right or wrong?
Nay, heaven is good to more,
And light is heaven's gift,
And the sun with the farmer rises,
Not with the learned at all,
Best lights from top to toe,
Him who is most on the move.
Enlightenment shall be our joy,
If by rush-light only,
But first and last by the people's voice
Enlightenment of life;
This springs from a nation's deeds
And grows as it is cradled,
Shine it shall be our folk-wit
Till the evening star be quenched.[1]

The school's task is enlightenment about what is truly human, a task which can be accomplished not by means of "dead books," but only through the living word. Thus the essence of schooling should be not book learning, but free conversation.

Grundtvig cast most of his educational theory into the unusual form of agitation for the establishment of an academy at Soer.[2] He proposed the founding there of a school for civic life, integrated around "the national character, the constitution, and our native land."[3]

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[1] Ibid., 138.

[2] Grundtvig, Vaerker, IV, Bøn og Begreb om en dansk Høiskole i Soer, 385. Soro Academy, at Soro in central Seeland, was originally founded in 1584 by King Frederik II as a school for his sons and selected young noblemen. It closed after a few months. Two years later it was reopened as a school for thirty noblemen and thirty commoners. In 1623 King Christian IV added a "knightly academy" run independently from the school which attracted nobles from various countries as well as King Carl X Gustav of Sweden as a pupil. In later years the fortunes of the school declined.

[3] Grundtvig, Vaerker, IV, 389.

In his proposals for the school at Soer he was thinking specifically, as did Plato, of those who would be the future leaders of the country, future councillors, assembly delegates, state officials. His proposals implied, as he saw the matter, a more comprehensive application:

> But now if a Danish School of higher education, as royal, as free and democratic (folkelig) as possible, is necessary for the training of officials, why should it be any less so for the great part of the people, who do not wish to, or cannot possibly become officials, but who must feed both themselves and them?[1]

Grundtvig was proposing a school for the awakening of the folk spirit, a matter which was important certainly to the ruling officials, but which was no less important to the people of the country being governed by those officials. Thus:

> That this nation's (Folkets) root and trunk, the tenants and freeholders both great and small, artisans of all kinds, sailors and merchants, need no other enlightenment and culture than what they get behind the plow, in the workshop, before the mast and in the store, may be thought by barbarians and tyrants, but this was never the scandinavian way of thinking among either kings or people (Folk), and it could never become so, since it is true here as nowhere else that we are all of "one blood", so the same talent for culture (Dannelse, culture or education) is found in huts as in high ceilings. This natural quality, now found properly only in the scandinavian kingdoms, where no invader has pushed in and made slaves of the old inhabitants, is something we cannot value enough, since it is able to give our love of country a different depth and our national (folkelige) culture a different truth than would be possible otherwise. And if our on the whole deplorable educational history had no other bright spot, one such spot would undeniably be that the school from the Reformation and especially from 1660 has emancipated and so to speak ennobled the boy from the humblest hut, so that he might share in the highest development and rise to the highest honors.[2]

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[1] Grundtvig, Vaerker, IV, Skolen for Livet, 210.

[2] Ibid.

Grundtvig believed that the education of the common man was necessary for the proper functioning of the new democracy. The common people were to be enlightened by means of the Folk High Schools, schools of higher education which concentrated on the development of the national spirit of the people. Thus:

> Enlightened by the school and freed by the church, civil society moves on the frontier between the visible and the invisible worlds, the world of the hand and the world of the spirit. It is this which constitutes it the proper subject of universal history. But it is equally true that the genuine state is only to be found where all these three are, with the true Church and the true school constantly accompanying it and conferring their benefits upon it.[1]

If education is thus indispensable for the correct functioning of civil society, we still need to examine in more detail the kind of education Grundtvig thought necessary for the enlightenment of the citizens of the land. The folk high school, according to Grundtvig, is to be a school in the service of life in creation, belonging in this way to the struggle between life and death.[2]

The proper method of teaching for the schools in general, in Grundtvig's theory, is to follow "the order of nature," that is, to be adapted to the natural needs of each age of the child. The teaching should be adapted to the child's capacity. Childhood, for example, is "fantasy time." Thus education should seek to make life graphic through image, story, and myth.[3]

Besides following the order of nature, instruction in the schools should follow the order of history, of the human race, because history is mankind's great experience and adventure, the proper basis of all true enlightenment. This is an important point in Grundtvig's educational theory, one which he expands as follows:

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[1] Grundtvig, in Allen, 48.

[2] Aronson, 299.

[3] Grundtvig, in Koch, 136.

> Understanding comes but gradually, from experience, and therefore only by observing the human race's career and one's own may one gain understanding of human life, so that the speculation which refuses to be life's son and pupil is obviously but a changeling. Only in history do we find man complete as he has so far been revealed; only in history does man manifest his actuality and true form, where there will not let itself be hidden from posterity.[1]

Therefore the school must be what Grundtvig called "historico-poetic." Much as Fichte and Herder had envisioned, Grundtvig similarly hoped for a large scale popular education by means of an introduction to history. By "history" Grundtvig did not mean dates and demonstrable facts about events, but rather ideal eternal history, that is, the history in all histories. This ideal history was not seen in non-religious terms, such as can be seen in Spengler, but rather in theological and providential terms. Historico-poetic, for Grundtvig, meant the spirited expression of the folk-spirit through poetic forms, the folk-spirit whose character is revealed through history. The poetic forms he meant were the myths of the north, as well as the numerous verses he wrote which were set to music as songs and hymns.

> Let freedom be our watchword in the North,
> Freedom for Loki and freedom for Thor,
> Freedom for the word in a world made new,
> Which it for itself has created under the sky;
> Thought's and faith's and learning's land.[2]

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[1] Ibid., 140.

[2] Grundtvig, Vaerker, IV, Nordens Mythologi, 9.

Grundtvig intended abstract concepts such as freedom to be presented within the context of the ancient northern myths, as in the example above. The most striking example of the historico-poetic in Grundtvig's works is the "Asa-ecstasy." Although he later repudiated the Asa-ecstasy as such, it nevertheless remains an important illustration of the historico-poetic:

> Mighty Odin, white Christ!
> Settled is your fight,
> Both sons of the Father of All.
> With our cross and with our sword
> Is your pyre here consecrated,
> Both of you loved our Father.[1]

Myth is self-understanding, the expression of human knowledge of the character of the spirit, in Grundtvig's view. The particular kind of myth which he considered most decisive for his time was the myth of the old gods, the pre-Christian deities which expressed the distinctive spirit of the north, continuity between heaven and earth, between the divine and the human. Thus he writes of the old gods with a reverence usually reserved for occasions of mystic insight:

> Here among the oaks dwell
> The dead gods of the North.
> Through falling tears
> How tenderly I gaze,
> What rises yonder?
> O is it not the altar's mossy stones
> That the branches of the oaks
> So closely overarch?
> It is! O, I tremble,
> I quiver with joy,
> And sanctified devotion fills my breast.
> I hasten, I hasten with winged steps
> To the Asa's altar to fling myself down
> And glorify the dead gods.[2]

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[1] Grundtvig, in Koch, 181.

[2] _Ibid_., 35.

According to Grundtvig, a people's myths figuratively express the folk-mind, the people's concept of existence. The myths symbolically express the collective observations of the people concerning nature and human life. The leading tendency of human nature which the northern myths express is the northern hero-spirit. The deep sense of the marvellous kinship between heaven and earth, Grundtvig believed, was expressed through the Scandinavian myths. This follows Grundtvig's earlier appreciation of Schelling, in which world history was seen as the continuous expression of the Godhead, in which each nation and each epoch has its place assigned to it. The myths of the peoples were expressions of their proper place in this divine scheme. The school must communicate to the nation's youth this historico-poetic knowledge, Grundtvig taught. Thus in his educational theory, as in the other parts of his social thought, Grundtvig was concerned with the development of peoples rather than with the achievements of individuals.

It was on this basis that Grundtvig placed his request for the founding of a school for Danish civic and national life.[1] The school at Soer was to have been for young men above the age of eighteen, the time when they waken as conscious and independent individuals who are attempting to find their place in life and in the community. Such a school, then, would not focus upon technical training of any kind, as such training could be provided elsewhere. Grundtvig's school would provide national knowledge, folk-culture, and folk-enlightenment.[2]

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[1] Grundtvig, Vaerker, IV, Bøn og Begreb om en dansk Høiskole i Soer, 385.

[2] Koch, 144.

The folk school of higher education assumes that the youths who would come there would receive their occupational training elsewhere, at industrial, trade, or agricultural schools, the aim of the folk school would be to enable each student to go on to his occupation with heightened zest, with a clearer view of human and civic relationships, especially within his own land, and with a livelier appreciation of that national fellowship which makes the individual citizen a participant in everything great and good that has been or shall be accomplished by the nation.[1] Thus, according to Grundtvig, each citizen could receive "the patriotic education that should be every nation's own and as far as possible common to all, both learned and lay."[2]

Grundtvig describes the kind of school he wanted to see as one

> Where neither old nor young were in compulsory residence or coupled off, but where everything highly attractive or stimulating to the spirit was in constant interaction, where lectures and disputations . . . had been superseded by decorous scholarly conversations mutually profitable to the younger and to those among the older who had ears to hear. If we now imagine the Latin schools out of the way, imagine all boys growing up as far as possible on their native soil and in God's free nature, in living interaction with the people, trained to some useful everyday occupation or other, so that even those who from childhood have seemed best fitted for brain work will also have learned to use their hands, and so that few or none would think of attending the scholars' high-school unless they had made their mark in the folk high-school, then we readily see that the professors--

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[1] The folk-school at Soer which Grundtvig recommended was never established. Instead the Danish folk high schools grew up under other leadership, inspired by Grundtvig but without a fixed plan. The first such school was founded at Rodding in North Schlesvig. Its stated purpose was to give the Danish peasants of the area a cultural stronghold against the rising national spirit of the Germans. It was closed during the war of 1848-50. See Koch, 220.

[2] Grundtvig, in Koch, 147.

> whom for brevity's sake we shall call residents of the high school--will find that they themselves, spiritually speaking, get as much as they give by having the young people there.[1]

The school's task was to make the young into men, understanding the human. Thus there must be freedom in the school for all persons and for all views.[2]

In the school, the spirit and the spirited factors in the educational process ought to be encouraged. According to Grundtvig, the historico-poetic approach, consisting of the concentration on folk-myths and the study of history, ought to be followed. Such a course of study could best be provided in the folk schools for higher education which Grundtvig recommended. The school, properly conceived as the place where the spirit is encouraged to develop, would be an invaluable aid to the proper governing of the state as well as a "porch" to the church. The state, if its citizens were well versed in the cultural traditions of the folk-spirit, would benefit greatly. The church would benefit as the youths would understand the importance of being "man first: then Christian." This was "life's order", an order of nature which the school if it were properly conceived would respect in educating youngsters.

The difficulty which arises in the consideration of the spirit in education concerns the adequacy of his method. It does not seem self-evident that spirit--or spiritedness, in this context--is inculcated or developed by the method of singing songs and holding conversations and studying history. The singing of songs can become either monotonous or formal and perfunctory. The conversations which Grundtvig wanted to see replace examinations and lectures can certainly become aimless or boring. The studying of history might not seem so thrilling to another generation of students. Actually, the Latin schools, which were the objects of Grundtvig's contempt, had themselves been received initially with enthusiasm. During the sixteenth century the study of Greek and Latin and Hebrew was considered comparatively rare and was thus received with enthusiasm. Grundtvig seems to have placed himself in the position of requiring novelty as such to produce a spirited response in young students.

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[1] Ibid., 149.

[2] Ibid., 141.

The difficulty which arises in connection with the folk-spirit is that the folk-spirit is too partial and limited. Although the folk-spirit of the Scandinavian people unifies heaven and earth in a unique manner, yet this continuity still remains threatened by death, the enemy--in the Scandinavian myths--of both earth and heaven. Thus while Grundtvig was satisfied with the explanation of reality which spirit appeared to provide, and while he chose spirit and life and animation for his province, he was still convinced that life and death were absolute opposites. Speaking to the German theologian Marheinecke, Grundtvig had said, "My antithesis is life and death."[1] Thus while Grundtvig talked of the continuity which the notion of spirit provided, yet in his mind there remained the ultimate discontinuity of death which remained unexplained on that basis.

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[1] Grundtvig, in Nielsen, 1.

Kierkegaard, on the other hand, had emphasized discontinuity between time and eternity, heaven and earth, rather than continuity. For Kierkegaard there was an infinite qualitative difference between the one and the other. For Grundtvig the only difference might be described as one of name--the names of the different aspects of spirit, for example--or of quantity. Yet having emphasized continuity, Grundtvig was unable to explain death.

The basic difficulty which arises, however, is the standard idealistic ambivalence. The spirit is real only when it is incarnate, yet the incarnate form constrains the spirit. The embodiment of spirit is its denial. When embodied the spirit becomes partial--Scandinavian--and limited--to one mother-tongue--and earthbound.

5. Conclusion

We have seen in this chapter that Grundtvig applied the concept of spirit or Geist to ecclesiastical polity, social organization, and educational theory. The concept of spirit was understood by Grundtvig to require freedom in which to develop properly or naturally. Thus freedom was seen to be necessary in church, state, and school. This freedom, it is to be noted, was not freedom for individual dissent, but rather freedom for the spirit to develop. The individual was intended to discover through the study of history and myth the character of humanity, revealed as the spirit is traced through these means.

In the church the spirit was considered to be the divine Holy Spirit, in theological terms. The traditional Lutheran theological formulation of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit encompasses Grundtvig's intent at this point. We note only that the spirit was somehow divisible in Grundtvig's theory, the division within the church being the Holy Spirit. That spirit was considered by Grundtvig to be the most important element in the constitution of the church is evidenced by his insistence upon his "matchless discovery," namely, that the oral recitation of the Apostles' Creed at baptism by the living congregation was the only certain foundation of the church.

In the state the spirit was the Volkgeist, the spirit of the people, expressed through their native tongue and the culture of the people. Through the language, the "word", communication is established between individuals, the individual is completed through the group. The argument was pressed by Grundtvig that a close inner connection exists between the people's national life and their religious life. A person must become aware of the human before he is prepared to accept the religious. Living Christianity must, he believed, always be national and must be expressed through the mother-tongue. Freedom in the sense of civil liberties must be granted by the state so that the folk-spirit of the people will not be unnaturally repressed and its development thwarted.

CHAPTER VI

COMPARISON AND EVALUATION

In the preceding chapters we have examined the thought of Kierkegaard and Grundtvig as each developed it in his own way. In this chapter we shall turn to consider the relationship between their philosophies. We shall begin by comparing their thought and shall conclude by evaluating their theories of society.

1. Comparison

One prominent scholar has said that the significance of Grundtvig lies in the fact that he has shown, by contrast with his contemporary and critic, Kierkegaard, that the new world of democracy, social endeavor, national solidarity and human rights is not opposed to the Christian faith, but can be enlisted in its service.[1] This estimate of the worth of these two thinkers is useful because it illustrates the need for making explicit the principles assumed in making such an evaluation. That is to say, the scholar cited has assumed a so-called "new world." This new world is assumed to be better because it is newer, the wave of the future, in some quasi-hegelian manner. The hegelian element is the crux of the difference between Grundtvig and

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[1] Allen, 93.

Kierkegaard.

The other principle assumed by the scholar cited was the allegedly self-evident good that whatever factors emerge in the new world ought to be enlisted in the "service" of the Christian faith. This points to the chief similarity between Kierkegaard and Grundtvig, namely that the religious values in existence are the highest values. Let us examine in detail the similarities and the differences between their view of society.

i. The Similarities between Kierkegaard and Grundtvig.--Both thinkers devoted a great amount of attention to the church.[1] Even though the established church was full of imperfections, both men thought that it contained the possibility of becoming ideal in some sense.[2] Grundtvig saw the established church as a broadly constituted institution which would guarantee freedom for the development of the spirit.[3] Kierkegaard saw the established church somewhat differently. It was potentially a place of honesty, where the leaders of the church could publicly admit that they had neglected to remain faithful to their spiritual constitution.[4] Therefore, the church was an important topic in the social philosophies of both men. They did not simply ignore its existence, nor did they conclude that it was so archaic that it was unimportant for the future of society. This is not to say that their views of the church as it ought to be are essentially compatible. Each one made it perfectly clear in his comments on the other that he believed the other's ideal church would be ruinous to the spiritual ideal.

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[1] Supra, p. 55, 125.

[2] Supra, p. 74, 132.

[3] Supra, p. 132.

[4] Supra, p. 64.

The major similarity between Kierkegaard and Grundtvig is their common rejection of a universal or general principle as a sufficient basis for the constitution of ideal society. The French Revolution had recommended equality as the proper goal for the organization of ideal society.[1] Condorcet represented equality as being the most logical and reasonable method for the restructuring of social relationships, "Equality of fact, final aim of the human heart."[2] Viewing this advice as the fruit and culmination of the enlightenment, both Kierkegaard and Grundtvig mistrusted its adequacy.

This rejection was based, in Grundtvig's case, upon his antirationalistic vitalism, his reliance upon the spirit above the reason as a guide in deciding upon the proper course of action in human affairs.[3] In Kierkegaard's case, the rejection was based upon his principle of subjectivity, upon his conviction that the individual was the only proper unit of value.[4] The individual, in Kierkegaard's view, was the only determinant of truth.[5] The state could not decree any course of action that would basically alter the truth as determined by individual subjectivity, although the state could quite properly coerce the behavior of its citizens.

This common rejection of any universal principle as sufficient to form the basis for the government of a society led to a more basic dissimilarity between Kierkegaard and Grundtvig. This dissimilarity is the basis for the difference between the social theories of the two men. Grundtvig, having rejected the correctness of any rationalistic method of ordering society, concluded that the proper basis of society was the folk, characterized by myth and common historical heritage.[1] Kierkegaard, having rejected rationalism, went on to reject the nation or the folk as the unit for spiritual activity or as the possessor of social truth.[2] Only the individual could know and test the truth, said Kierkegaard.[3] There was no social truth. Truth was subjectivity. Truth was only individual. This basic disagreement, with Grundtvig trusting the group over the individual, while Kierkegaard trusted only the individual, led to the many divergences both of expression and of conception that characterize these two contemporaries.

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[1] Postgate, 54. [2] Ibid. [3] Supra, p. 110.

[4] Supra, p. 15. [5] Supra, p. 17.

ii. Differences Between the Social Philosophies of Kierkegaard and Grundtvig.--Both Kierkegaard and Grundtvig rejected rationalism, both men interpreted the question of the ideal society in religious terms, that is to say, as the question of how the Christian faith can become efficacious and contemporary.[4] They differed most obviously in their answer to this question. Grundtvig's answer was that through the cult, the sacrament, the historical and contemporary Christian Church one could realize the ideal and spiritual goal of life.[5] Kierkegaard's answer was that in the face of objective uncertainty the individual's leap of faith would be the means whereby the spiritual ideal could be realized.[6]

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[1] Supra, p. 133. [2] Supra, p. 66. [3] Supra, p. 84.

[4] Supra, p. 74, 132. [5] Supra, p. 131. [6] Supra, p. 86.

Grundtvig, in a manner similar to Hegel, had traced the social realization of personality through the expanding spheres of institutional participation in the lives of others; in the church, the nation, the school, and the all-comprehending scope of civilization. History was seen as manifesting the ever fuller significance of free self-realization.[1] The spirit was to be allowed development through freedom.[2] This social orientation was the target of Kierkegaard's polemic.

Kierkegaard wrote that Grundtvig lacked an appreciation for the dialectical and ironic character of history:

> so one has plenty of time to occupy himself with world-history. But it is just here that we have the contradiction: with respect to one's own life and its problems, to take refuge in something magical, and they to be so busily engaged with the whole of human history.[3]

Such a course of action is mistaken, in Kierkegaard's view, because

> when tests and temptations assail dialectically, and when the victory is also dialectically construed, a man will always have enough to do with himself. To be sure, in that case he will not be in a position to fascinate all human kind by the blissful enchantment of matchless visions.[4]

Thus Kierkegaard criticizes the concentration upon social and historical topics which amount to actual distractions from life on an individual basis. Kierkegaard preferred to base his philosophy upon the certainty of present, individual experience. Grundtvig based his upon the certainty of present, social experience--the experience of the contemporary church. In Kierkegaard's terms, this latter was objective, while the former was subjective and thereby the only certainty for an existing individual.

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[1] Supra, p. 114. [2] Supra, p. 141.

[3] Kierkegaard, Samlede Vaerker, IX, Afsluttende Uvidenskabelig Efterskrift, 42.

[4] Ibid.

Kierkegaard recognized that Grundtvig's theory had merit insofar as it was besed on the fact that the church does exist in the present. It is a present reality. He summarizes the significance of Grundtvig's view as follows:

> So then the Church exists; and from the Church as something present, as contemporaneous with the inquirer (by which there is secured for the problem the equality of contemporaneity), one may learn what is essential to Christianity; for this is what the Church professes.[1]

The only problem which arises with such a formulation is, according to Kierkegaard, when the idea is added that the Church is also the Apostolic Church, "the same Church which has persisted for eighteen centuries." That is,

> the predicate: Christian, is thus more than a present predicate. When predicated of the present it implies a past, and thus involves a historicity (Historiskhed) in quite the same sense as the Bible. Now has all the profit been for nothing. The only thing historical (det eneste Historiske) which is superior to proof is simultaneous existence; every determination of pastness requires proof.[2]

As an amplification and illustration of the argument the statement is made that

> thus if someone were to say to a man: prove that you exist, the other will answer quite properly that the demand is nonsense. If he says on the other hand: "I who now exist (er til) had an existence over four hundred years ago as essentially (vaesentligen) the same person, "the other man has the right to reply: "Here a proof is needed".[3]

Thus Kierkegaard objected to Grundtvig's theory of the Church because of the particular form which that theory took. It was because Grundtvig attempted to base the Church upon the foundation of a proposition which was historical in character that Kierkegaard believed the same objections to apply to it which applied against the Bible.

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[1] Kierkegaard (Climacus), Concluding Unscientific Postscript, 39.

[2] Kierkegaard, Afsluttende uvidenskabelig Efterskrift, 38.

[3] Ibid.

> This discipline would have the task of proving the primitive character of the confession of faith, its identity of meaning everywhere and in every moment through eighteen centuries...and so again there will be a nosing about in ancient documents. The living word cannot help us.[1]

It is worth noting that Kierkegaard's criticisms are not presented with any hope of converting Grundtvig: "To be sure, neither will it help to set this forth before Grundtvig. This is not done with any hope, rather with no hope."[2]

Kierkegaard agrees with Grundtvig that "the living word declares the existence of the Church," but denies that the living word proves that "the Church has been in existence for eighteen centuries, that it is essentially the same, that it has persisted in a wholly unaltered form, and so forth."[3]

It should be clear that Kierkegaard judges the point at which Grundtvig's theory of the Church to break down is when it is made dependent upon the "matchless discovery," the Apostolic *Symbolum*. According to Kierkegaard nothing can be proved with certainty from history. The best that historical proofs can provide is probability. Kierkegaard therefore prefers to base his philosophy of existence upon the certainties of present human nature as demonstrated in the individual experience of each single person. Grundtvig was mistaken, Kierkegaard believed, in holding that the essential part of Christianity was expressed in the *Symbolum*, the Apostles' Creed.[4]

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[1] *Ibid*. [2] *Ibid*., 39. [3] *Ibid*.

[4] Søren Kierkegaard, *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer*, ed. by P.A. Heiberg and V. Kuhr (København: Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag, 1909), I, 27.

Grundtvig was not content with the certainty available to him through the contemporary church. He attempted to search out a foundation for the church which was somehow more certain than the existing society itself. Kierkegaard disdained this effort of Grundtvig, calling it a craving for "superstitious security," a desire for "something certain to cling to" which was out of reach of the dialectical:

> Precisely because Grundtvig is stirred in immediate passion, he is no stranger to doubts and temptations. With respect to these, one finds a short cut, by depending upon something magical.[1]

This magical and superstitious item, in Kierkegaard's characterization, was the Apostles' Creed. It was correct to note that Grundtvig used the Creed in a way similar to the use of the Bible made by many church people at the time. As Kierkegaard stated the matter:

> Grundtvig had rightly perceived that the Bible could not hold out against the encroaching doubt; but he had not perceived that the reason was that both attack and defense were involved in an approximation-process which in its everlastingly continued striving is dialectically incommensurable with an infinite decision, such as that on which an eternal happiness is based.[2]

Human life being limited in time and ability, human individuals cannot make their eternal happiness dependent upon the results of any historical research, in Kierkegaard's view. Historical research into the reliability of the Creed is no improvement over research into the composition and reliability of the Bible.

Kierkegaard was much more appreciative of Grundtvig's other insight, whereby he relied upon the contemporary congregation of the church as the foundation for faith. Whereas formerly

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[1] Kierkegaard (Climacus), Afsluttende uvidenskabelig Efterskrift, 42.

[2] Ibid., 37.

> it was the Bible which was to decide objectively what is Christianity and what is not, so now it is the Church that is to serve as the certain objective recourse. More specifically, it is the living word in the Church, the confession of faith, and the word in connection with the sacraments.[1]

Kierkegaard rejects this theory on the ground that any form of objective certainty is irrelevant to the individual as existing. In other words, no matter how objective an entity the Church were to become, the fundamental matter is not dealt with, namely the individual's appropriation of that objective truth. Truth, Kierkegaard emphasized, is not "immediate," it is not an "extremely free-and easy relationship between an immediate consciousness and a sum of propositions."[2] Instead, "truth is spirit, it is an inward transformation, a realization of inwardness."[3] Or phrased another way, designed to illustrate the agreement between Christianity and Socrates, Kierkegaard wrote, "the movement of the spirit is inward," and that "the truth is the subject's transformation in himself."[4] Therefore, if such an inward transformation did not occur, such objective improvements as Grundtvig's political program would be irrelevant.

Thus, Grundtvig's intense feeling for the congregation was dismissed by Kierkegaard. Grundtvig was, in his opinion, trading what was authentic--the Individual--for what was an illusion--the crowd. In a passage filled with satire, Kierkegaard wrote:

> Verily, if Faith ever gets the notion of marching forward

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[1] Kierkegaard (Climacus), Concluding Unscientific Postscript, 37.

[2] Ibid. [3] Ibid. [4] Ibid., 38.

> triumphantly *en masse*, it will not be necessary to license the singing of songs of mockery, for it would not help to forbid them to all . . . . For a faith that celebrates its triumph is the most ridiculous thing conceivable. If the contemporary generation of believers found no time to triumph, neither will any later generation; for the time is always the same, and Faith is always militant.[1]

What was required, according to Kierkegaard, were deeds, not celebrations:

> for when will there be found time to compose songs of triumph or occasion to sing them? If such a thing were to happen it would be as if an army drawn up in battle array, instead of marching forward to meet the enemy, were to march home again in triumph to their barracks in the city.[2]

Although Grundtvig was acquainted with Kierkegaard's rejection of his thought he did not reply to Kierkegaard's criticisms at length until he began to write *The Christian Catechism*, from 1855 to 1861.[3] Grundtvig rejected Kierkegaard's criticisms by arguing that they might well apply to the Bible-theologians of the State Church, but they did not apply to the Grundtvigians since their thought was based upon the certain foundation of "the Lord's own Word" in baptism and communion.[4] This reply missed the point of Kierkegaard's argument, therefore, it is important to examine the intent of Grundtvig's thought.

Grundtvig said that Kierkegaard was "an excellent hair-splitter."[5] Kierkegaard was mistaken, in Grundtvig's thought, in "raising the banner for what he calls 'New Testament' Christianity."[1] As Grundtvig interpreted the intent of Kierkegaard's polemic writing, Kierkegaard was intending to establish a new kind of literalism in religion by using the New Testament as the norm for the religious life, thus falling into the error of vulnerability to scholarly historical criticism from which Grundtvig thought he had rescued religion. Grundtvig understood "New Testament", as used by Kierkegaard, to be an illegitimate qualification of religion. Rather, religion should be an absolute predicate. That is to say, Grundtvig understood Kierkegaard to mean by the "New Testament" merely and "exclusively the writings of the apostles and literal Christianity." Therefore, Kierkegaard was interpreted as the proponent of a dead-book religion, the only novelty being his preference for the New Testament over the entire Bible. As the result, according to Grundtvig, those who believe Kierkegaard's theory are led to "spiritlessness" and to the opposite of what is desirable in the ideal religious life. Grundtvig interpreted Kierkegaard narrowly as interested only in the return of the Christian Church to the literal words of the New Testament. The difference between their two views, on Grundtvig's view, is a difference in the proper constitution of the ideal society. Grundtvig rejected as mistaken Kierkegaard's call for the return of ideal society to the narrow boundaries of the literal words of the New Testament. It was far more preferable, according to Grundtvig, to trust in the numbers of believers and the historical continuity of the church in its "confession, common proclamation and hymns of thanksgiving."[1]

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[1] Kierkegaard (Climacus), *Philosophical Fragments*, 135, 136.

[2] Kierkegaard (Climacus), *Samlede Vaerker*, VI, 97.

[3] Grundtvig, *Vaerker*, VI, *Den christelige Børnelaerdom*, 1.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.*, 61.

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[1] Ibid.

In Kierkegaard's view both Grundtvig and Bishop Mynster had made essentially the same mistake. That mistake was to have taken part in the process of accommodation, to moderate the stringent demands of Christianity so as to make it seem more pleasant and more acceptable to the public. Thus masses of people were delighted and acclaimed them as courageous men of principle. However, the very fact that it was the public, the masses, which responded to this process was evidence enough for Kierkegaard, who believed that this was itself the fatal abstraction. The public was not the proper vehicle for the reception of value, the individual was. Thus the condition needed even for the reception of religion was absent as long as this process of accommodation continued, a process which drained the passion out of the age. An age without passion would not even be capable of resisting the true religion. As an instance of this earth-bound vision Kierkegaard cites Grundtvig's aim of securing civil liberty, freedom of expression and of speech. As Kierkegaard saw it this was not the fundamental aim. Instead, the basic fault with society at the time was that both the church and the state falsely claimed to be Christian and thereby capable of conferring eternal happiness and peace upon their subjects. What was demanded in the face of such a situation, according to Kierkegaard, was an initial confession of honesty by the leaders of these institutions.

Kierkegaard was critical of the quality of peace which Grundtvig was seeking, nothing more exalted or permanent than peace in his family and peace with contemporary society and with the world as it is. Grundtvig was willing to trade the tension necessary as a condition for spiritual enlightenment for the temporary peace of enjoyment. Thus Kierkegaard wrote:

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[1] _Ibid_., 91.

> Measured by this measure, it is easily seen that Grundtvig can never properly be said to have fought for Christianity; he actually fought only for something earthly, civil freedom for himself and his adherents (Tilhaengere); and he has never fought with Christian passion. No, in comparison with the passion of original Christianity is Grundtvig's enthusiasm lukewarmness, indifferentism.[1]

Kierkegaard denied that feature of Grundtvig's theory of society that said that the national was an indispensable vehicle of human value. It was not correct to value world history so highly:

> We men flatter ourselves that world history is something immensely important, something which must therefore attract God's attention to a high degree.
>
> Question: I do not take it upon myself to answer it, I merely raise it, and I do so only because Christianity teaches that the propagation of the species is a mistake--but the personnel of history, these millions, are produced in this way. The question is whether the whole business of world history, the four monarchies--Hegel, Grundtvig, Geert Westphaler (he too establishes four monarchies!), the railways and the telegraphs--whether all this concerns God, or pleases him more than all the uproar and hubbub which children make in their play-room, instead of sitting still and reading their books (as the parents would like)? Is this belief in the infinite importance of history not one of those human illusions which aims at maintaining and encouraging the pleasure in life, the pleasure of joining in the noise, inflamed by the tale of what all these various kings and emperors have managed to achieve of devilish uproar and noise during their life.[2]

Kierkegaard considered egoism to be the real motive for all the interest in world history. For this reason he rejected Grundtvig's concentration on history, dismissing it as of no importance for the encouragement of authentic individual choice.

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[1] Kierkegaard, Samlede Vaerker, XIX, 199.

[2] Kierkegaard, The Last Years, 288.

Kierkegaard's reasoning was that

> the certainty of sense perception, to say nothing of historical certainty, is uncertainty, is only an approximation; and that the positive and immediate relationship to it is the negative.[1]

In other words, probability is the only possible result of historical inquiry. Kierkegaard believes Grundtvig mistaken in his effort to base education and life on history. The only certainty available to the existing individual is the certainty of faith--namely, individual choice in the face of risk. Objective certainty is not possible in existence, according to Kierkegaard, yet the individual has an infinite passion for certainty. Therefore, Kierkegaard concluded, certainty could only be provided by faith, which is the same as subjective truth. This inward process depends upon the tension or paradox between the objective uncertainty and the individual's infinite passion for certainty. For this reason Kierkegaard was convinced that the kind of education which Grundtvig recommended was based upon a mistaken kind of knowledge, the error that history could provide a certain and objective foundation for the contemporary individual life. If education was central for Grundtvig, choice was central for Kierkegaard.

Grundtvig and Kierkegaard differed in their estimate of human nature. Grundtvig had admired the Danish dramatist Holberg, and had apparently read his Moral Thoughts, in which is written: "Children must be made human beings before they can become Christians."[1] Whereas Kierkegaard shared the pessimistic Lutheran estimate of human nature, Grundtvig spoke of the dogma that the image of God in man had been obliterated by the Fall as the great error of Lutheranism.[2] Grundtvig was more concerned with the possibilities of human nature than with its shortcomings. He was convinced of the essential nobility of man. Grundtvig agreed with Lutheran theology that man cannot save himself.[3] Salvation remained the free gift from God. However, Grundtvig denied those doctrines which so over-emphasized the fall as to make man subhuman, either a beast or a devil.[4] He wrote that God, despite the fall, spoke his word to patriarchs and prophets. Abraham was called "God's friend." Even fallen man remained of "divine origin," in Grundtvig's thought.[5] Grundtvig rejected the radical doctrine of the fall so that the factor of continuity would remain intact. Both man and man's society were good.

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[1] Kierkegaard (Climacus), Concluding Unscientific Postscript, 38.

In contrast, Kierkegaard believed that society was connected with the natural part of man's existence, opposed to the spiritual, the expression of opposite principles. Thus natural society could not be fundamentally reformed because it remained on a lower level from the level of the spirit. The state could only become ideal in the sense of being the best of its kind. To improve beyond that point it would be necessary for the Individual so motivated to pass into the religious sphere of existence, to live by a different principle, the principle of suffering, instead of the principle of pleasure.

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[1] Koch, 221. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid. [4] Ibid. [5] Ibid., 156.

iii. Conclusion.--Grundtvig had developed a strong theory of community, because community was the value-bearing unit of his social theory. Community was the nation,[1] or the folk,[2] or, in basically the same terms, the national church,[3] similarly characterized by the mother-tongue and the cultural heritage of the fatherland.[4]

Kierkegaard, on the contrary, would have no part of such ideas. He can be said to have no theory of community, except in the sense of state police-power, whose only proper function was the restraint of wrong-doers.[5] Such a conception is markedly different from Grundtvig's conception of the community as the proper locus of the spiritual life.

The state, according to Kierkegaard, was an authoritarian institution, whose function was not to encourage the good life, not even the life of the spirit, since it operated on an entirely different level of being.[6] The state existed to preserve order.[7] Its proper function was to protect property and public order. It was even proper for the state to initiate proceedings against genuine witnesses to the truth, if those witnesses were threatening public order and peace.[8] The true witnesses would not complain or seek to have the laws altered in their own interest, rather suffering the consequences of civil disturbance as a mark of their character. Through such suffering they could be assured (insofar as assurance is possible in the truly spiritual life, which is characterized by objective uncertainty) that they were on a higher level of being, above the epicurean love of peace and enjoyment which was the highest proper political goal.

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[1] Supra, 133. [2] Supra, 153. [3] Supra, 132. [4] Supra, 133.

[5] Supra, 51. [6] Supra, 46. [7] Supra, 54. [8] Supra, 51.

According to Grundtvig, the state was an important expression of the spiritual life of the people.[1] In the course of his political career, Grundtvig became convinced that the state ought not be constituted on an authoritarian, but instead on a national democratic basis.[2] The state can indeed encourage the good life in the most fundamental sense. The state can encourage freedom, through which the spirit of man can come to its most complete development.[3] As such the state is a positive element in the spiritual life, rather than the negative or restraining element envisaged by Kierkegaard.

Kierkegaard's view of the institutional church was negative. The state Church was not Christian. The most positive step it could take would be to honestly and promptly admit this situation. Grundtvig, on the other hand, approached the institutional church with a positive program. The state should loosen the parish bond by legislative reform.[4] When the people were no longer compelled to seek spiritual aid from the local parish pastor, whose views might not be congenial to theirs, the operation of this new freedom would enable the unhindered development of the spirit.[5]

Education, according to Grundtvig, ought to be conducted in the light of the proper understanding of community.[6] Education ought to recognize the decisive spiritual importance of the group. The people's national spirit, as reflected in the folk-mythology, in the mother-tongue, in the national history, and in the community songs, should be the basis for the education of the future leaders of the country and of the common people.[1] Folk High Schools, which were to embody this conception of a "school for life", were to become the key to a new spiritual awakening of the national life of the people.[2] Foreign influences were harmful, as they were rooted in other "folks," other nations. Latin was detrimental, and the "black schools" which taught it should be abolished.[3] Grundtvig seems to be suggesting that there is no body of knowledge which is in any way common to all mankind. The basis for any national life and for any effective education is the traditions of a circumscribed society. Kierkegaard did not devote much attention to the subject of education. He taught Latin in one of what Grundtvig called the "black schools."[4] Judging from the many references to Latin myths and classic authors,[5] Kierkegaard assumed that education would and probably should continue in much the same manner, that readers would continue to comprehend his literary allusions. However, the basic reason why Kierkegaard did not comment significantly upon educational practice and reform was that he considered education largely irrelevant to the spiritual life. The life of the spirit was a life of choice, not a life of knowledge.[6] Choice was not educable, in the last analysis. The alternatives might be made clearer through education, but the individual is finally thrown back upon himself. The individual must make the leap of faith alone.[7] Dread and objective uncertainty remain which are beyond the legitimate reach of the educational process. Education and approximation are distractions from the truth, not helps in its realization.

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[1] *Supra*, 133. [2] *Supra*, 141. [3] *Supra*, 142. [4] *Supra*, 131.

[5] *Supra*, 130. [6] *Supra*, 151.

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[1] Supra, 147. [2] Supra, 148. [3] Supra, 144. [4] Lowrie, II, 603.
[5] Kierkegaard, Stages on Life's Way, 196. [6] Supra, 15. [7] Supra, 20.

It can be seen from these considerations that the differences between Kierkegaard and Grundtvig were considerable and profound, and not, as a recent publication has stated, the result of a "misunderstanding" between the two thinkers.[1] For Grundtvig, society was the locus of value.[2] For Kierkegaard, the only locus of value was the individual.[3]

2. Evaluation

In order to adequately evaluate the social thought of Kierkegaard and Grundtvig, it will be necessary for us to make explicit the criteria for that evaluation. Although it is not possible to develop a complete social philosophy in this context, it remains important to indicate the character and the direction of the criteria employed. When this is done, the required perspective will be given to the process of evaluation.

i. A Definition of Society.--Social philosophy is defined as the philosophy of society, that is, the philosophy about society, about what constitutes society as society. Thus we take the principal topic of social philosophy to be the definition of the concept of society. Accordingly, we shall evaluate any particular social philosophy as more or less adequate in the degree to which that philosophy investigates the meaning of the concept of society.

Our own definition of society is based on one consideration: namely, what does reason alone require of the term in order for the term to be internally self-consistent? To be self-consistent, the term of society necessarily refers to a group of persons structured or organized in some manner. This being the case, the term society is a term for order of some type, order understood as being the equivalent of organization. If order is the structure of society, the structure of order is authority. Authority is the conceptual representation of whatever it is that enables order to resist disorder. Authority is channeled by means of the agency of government to the citizens of society, but this statement is not our direct concern in this context, which is to do nothing more than state what it is that makes the term of society maintain its internal consistency as a concept.[1] Our contention is that the two terms, order and authority, are of such a character that if they were not necessary elements in the concept of society, then that concept would not refer to society as such.

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[1] Knud E. Lögstrup and G. Harbsmeier (ed.), Kontroverse um Kierkegaard und Grundtvig; Vol. I, Das Menschliche und das Christliche (München, 1966).

[2] Supra, 133.

[3] Supra, 83.

It may be objected that the notion of the "common welfare" ought to have been included as a necessary element in the definition of society. Thus, it could be argued, the notions of order and authority cannot be properly explicated apart from some reference to the common welfare. The function of order and authority is such that they serve the good of the citizens of the society, the citizens being bettered by the maintenance of order.

It is not denied that the common welfare is important and beneficial. We shall include as part of our evaluation of the two thinkers under consideration their notions of the common welfare. What is denied is that the notion of the common welfare is a necessary part of the definition of society. Rather, it should be considered under the idea of the good.[1]

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[1] From such a basis, recognizing the significance of society without assigning some form of ultimate reality to the term without qualification, it would evidently be possible to begin the development of a science of meta-politics or meta-sociology by investigating what statements are logically implied by prior social statements. Thus, it might be asked what the logical status is of sentences employing social predicates, what the meaning is of a social predicate, as well as how such predicates function in sentences expressing social approval.

However, let us pursue the objection further. It could be maintained that every theory of the state has the element of the common welfare as an integral part of the theory. This is true not only in democratic and socialist theories, whether utopian or scientific, but even in absolutist theories such as that of Hobbes, whose definition of the common welfare was the sovereign's guarantee to the subject against the fear of violent murder. It is worth noting that such a definition as Hobbes' of "common welfare" would provoke protests from most on the grounds that they had a great deal more in mind by the phrase than that.

Nevertheless, it is still denied that the notion of the common welfare is a necessary and logically indispensable part of the definition of society as such. It is true that the common welfare might enter into the constitution of a given state once it is formed, or even at the precise moment of the state's historical inception, but this is quite different from proving that such a notion has necessary logical validity as an indispensable element in the definition of society. In other words, society remains society whether or not it is devoted to serving the common welfare.[1] Whether the common welfare is secured or destroyed, society remains society. Society is neither added to nor subtracted from by the idea of the common welfare. Bad society is as much society, however undesirable, as is good society.[2]

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[1] It can be argued that society is not good for a person at all, an argument which would form the opposite extreme. For every alleged benefit cited from society such an argument would cite an evil whose source was in society. For every virtue taught, a vice could be cited. Order may be for the good of society and the harm of the individual, in this view. Authority, similarly, could be viewed as benefiting the group to the detriment of the individual.

Once again, it must be emphasized that this is not to say that the common welfare is not a great good. The common welfare must simply be grounded in some concept besides the concept of society. The possibilities, although beyond the purpose of this section, would include the nature of man as such, the nature of truth, or religious sanctions of some sort, any one of which could serve as an adequate basis for the grounding of the common welfare.

In addition to the definition of society, then, a theory of the good is required for the satisfactory evaluation of a social philosophy. In this context, we will confine ourselves to the observation that the good is that which promotes individual well-being. Well-being, for our purposes, refers to growth, either intellectual or spiritual. Thus a social philosophy which increases individual well-being in this sense will be said to be more adequate than one which does not.

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[1] If the common welfare were to be erroneously grounded in the concept of society, this would lead to the further error of confusing the continuation of a given state with the common welfare as such. Thus the governor of such a state, beset with disorders, may go to any lengths to preserve the state in the mistaken belief that its fall would be detrimental to the common welfare. Instead, the common welfare grounded in the idea of the good or in the nature of man, may, upon occasion, require the downfall of the state for the sake of the common welfare. The state may have become the chief hindrance to the realization of the common welfare.

[2] It might be said, for example, that man is impelled toward association in society in spite of his will. Man is in society and hates it, inventing either crime or law as a means of revenge.

It may be objected that the two factors of authority and order are too static to express the dynamic and changing quality of society as it evolves and progresses. This objection is mistaken because it misses the central point of the definition. That is, society remains society, it is self-identical, no matter how much it changes or evolves through time. If society were to evolve into something else, then it would no longer be society which was being considered, but literally something else.

It is not correct to suppose that a static and unchanging view of society is implied by the analysis of the term into the components of authority and order. The theory of society would be static only if all order and authority were identified with the existing state. This has not been done. Authority is explicitly noted to be actual authority, not necessarily authority as claimed by some government. In the same way, order is meant to denote only the order of society as such, not the order provided by some existing state.

One serious objection remaining to be raised against the definition of society as order and authority is more basic. That is the question of whether the word "society" possesses reality in a meaningful sense, that is, does the word have genuine validity or is it simply a linguistic convention? If it is argued that the term "society" is nothing more than a linguistic invention, the argument is rejected. The contention is that "society" does indeed refer to an actual object--or better, to an actual set of relationships. It is this set of relationships which we have been investigating by our definition, which represents nothing more than the effort to describe accurately the common characteristics of the object of the word "society."

It is acknowledged that these definitions may be inadequate in many ways, that they are incomplete as presented. Yet they do serve the useful purpose of making explicit the criteria which we intend to use in evaluating the comparative worth of the two social philosophies which are before us. Let us now turn from the consideration of the criteria for evaluation to the evaluation *per se*.

How do the social philosophies of Kierkegaard and Grundtvig compare with the definition we have stated, namely, that society is that unit of the organization of human life which is characterized by the structure of order and authority?

ii. *Order as a necessary component of society*.--It will be recalled that Kierkegaard conceived of the state as existing to provide and maintain order within the natural sphere of existence.[1] Kierkegaard limited the idea of order to the state, rather than society.[2] It will also be recalled that Kierkegaard conceived of ideal society, the religious life, as superior to order.[3] The religious sphere was above the ethical sphere.[4] Thus the order provided by the ethical was inapplicable to the religious level of being.[5] Therefore, according to Kierkegaard, order was subordinate to the ideals of religion.

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[1] *Supra*, 51.

[2] *Supra*, 69.

[3] *Supra*, 47.

[4] *Supra*, 11.

[5] *Supra*, 45, 48, 50, 54.

We may evaluate Kierkegaard's theory of order as deficient in its limitation to the state, but self-consistent within this limited area. His theory is deficient because, by limiting the function of order to the state, he is unable to conceive ideal society with any degree of internal coherence. That is to say, ideal society is described in such individualistic terms that it may be questioned whether the term "society" is applicable at all. Kierkegaard's doctrine of inwardness (Inderlighed),[1] his term which describes the process of subjective existential thought, seems to imply a separateness which is the opposite of any social enterprise.

Kierkegaard did not mean by subjectivity the distortion of reality by the personal consciousness. Reality remained reality. Truth remained truth, although it was subjectively appropriated and subjectively validated.[2] Truth was not a private revelation, limited to one individual, although Kierkegaard in the Book on Adler did reveal that he had once considered and then rejected such a formulation.[3] Therefore, the social aspect of ideal life was expressed visibly by the institutional church remained a part of Kierkegaard's thought. Ideal society was a type of church,[4] though Kierkegaard--unlike Grundtvig[5]--never developed clearly what he meant by this image.

Kierkegaard refused to institutionalize his ideas in any form. He rebuffed would-be disciples.[6] He never provided a thorough-going positive program for church reform.[1] He did not provide for the continuation of his theories by any educational means. His refusal to perpetuate his theories institutionally can be said to rest on an artifically limited view of the function of order. That is, order, while appropriate to the political life of the state, was inappropriate to the religious life of the ideal church.[2]

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[1] Supra, 15. [2] Supra, 15.

[3] Søren Kierkegaard, On Authority and Revelation, trans. Walter Lowrie (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 15.

[4] Supra, 71. [5] Supra, 126. [6] Kierkegaard, The Last Years, 75.

Kierkegaard would disagree with the above criterion of evaluation by insisting that order is only applicable to secular society.[3] Secular society is the expression of natural datum.[4] The greatest possible good for secular society is an ethical good, the good of peace and enjoyment, epicureanism at its best.[5] Therefore, the concept of order is appropriate only as the means whereby civil peace is ensured.

The religious sphere of existence is different in character.[6] Sacred society--the church as it ought to be--is the expression of ideal society.[7] As such, it is based not upon an epicurean peace and order but upon the absolute demands of faith.[8] Peace is replaced by dread, paradox and objective uncertainty.[9] Order, Kierkegaard would say, is inappropriate to the higher level of being.[10]

However, the problem which occurs is how religious knowledge should be viewed. Is religious knowledge subject to or immune from irony? Is everything dialectical, or everything except the religious demands? What would Kierkegaard say to the teleological suspension of the commandment, for example, to love one's neighbor? That is to say, the religious commandment to love one's neighbor was expressed in universal terms. As with any ethical demand of any kind, no exceptions were permitted. Kierkegaard insisted upon the seriousness and the universality of the religious commandment cited.[1] However, there appears to be no reason why this commandment could not be suspended as was the commandment against murder in the case of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac.[2] That is to say, Kierkegaard provides no explicit reason for making any distinction between the two cases.

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[1] Supra, 78.
[2] Supra, 56.
[3] Supra, 61.
[4] Supra, 31.
[5] Supra, 51.
[6] Supra, 11.
[7] Supra, 73, 74.
[8] Supra, 59.
[9] Supra, 12.
[10] Supra, 54.

Kierkegaard could probably answer such a question by saying that paradox is applicable only when you compare the ideal with the natural, the sacred with the secular. The demands of the religious life appear absurd when viewed from the natural sphere.[3] When the ideal, religious stage is reached, the absurdity disappears and irony is no longer appropriate.[4] The difficulty with this solution to the problem, a solution which is admittedly speculative, is that Kierkegaard's use of irony increases and is more generalized during his attack upon the established church.[5] That is, as he increasingly clarifies his own conception of "religiousness B," he does not diminish his use of irony.[6] On the other hand, paradox--which, in Kierkegaard's use referred to that which was contrary to plausibility--emerged first in the ethical sphere, later developing an intellectual application, finally becoming somehow a characteristic of "religiousness B."[7] Initially, paradox in the ethical sphere indicated that Hegel's system was inapplicable to individual interest as a particular matter because Hegel's system was concerned only with the universal.[1] Following this, paradox in the intellectual area became the "absolute paradox" of the God-Man.[2] The last phase in Kierkegaard's use of the concept of paradox is the least well delineated. "Religiousness B" is called "paradox religiousness,"[3] but Kierkegaard does not make clear what this means, how this relates to his alternate suggestion that religious knowledge is in some sense beyond irony. Suffice it to say that Kierkegaard, who would confine order to the political stage,[4] does not provide any clear defense against the objection that this unduly limits the concept of order. This limitation might explain why he was never able to develop a positive plan for the realization of the ideal society, although he surely believed in the possibility of its development.[5]

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[1] Søren Kierkegaard, Works of Love, trans. Howard & Edna Hong (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), 34.

[2] Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, 67.

[3] Supra, 33.

[4] Supra, 13.

[5] Supra, 61.

[6] Supra, 58.

[7] Supra, 13.

Order, which we have conceived of as consisting in those procedures, whether written and "constitutional" or unwritten and "traditional" through which authority is transmitted to the individual member of society, there to receive his assent or his defiance, Grundtvig believed to be derived from the people.[6] The people, or the "folk," with its language and myth and historical heritage is the source of order.[7] Grundtvig's excessive patriotism was based on the belief that foreign structures and languages, while valid for the foreign folk, would destroy the folk-spirit of the Danish people.[8] Education should be based on the spirit of the people.[1] Political structures, as well, must derive from the folk-heritage of the people.[2] Thus, Grundtvig, despite his considerable difficulties with the establishment, never (after the Clausen affair in 1825)[3] agitated for the overthrow of the order.[4] Instead, Grundtvig advocated a limited monarchy and reform by legislative means.[5] This, he believed, was the method appropriate to the national spirit of the time.

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[1] Supra, 21. [2] Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, 21.

[3] Supra, 12. [4] Supra, 51. [5] Supra, 73. [6] Supra, 139.

[7] Supra, 138. [8] Supra, 144.

For Grundtvig, the human always exists as something national.[6] Humanity is not an abstract idea, cosmopolitan or international, but always something concrete: being human in a particular place and among a particular people with its own history and its own speech.[7] For Kierkegaard, on the other hand, the human was something individual.[8] Grundtvig's key term is "nationality."[9] Nationality is unequal to "nationalistic," or "popular," or "democratic." Nationality is closely related to the folk-spirit.[10] Both express the fact that man is fashioned by the living power which expresses itself in speech and which fashions human life.

> It is a certainty that any nation which forgets that they are human beings and that all their affairs should be conducted as humanly as possible will in no wise become gods thereby but beasts or devils as the case may be, and in our own day a little of each. When I speak of the national as the supreme in every land, it is by no means as opposed to the human, but only as a mark of distinction from what is purely national in other lands and only as opposed to whatever

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[1] Supra, 148. [2] Supra, 133. [3] Supra, 95.

[4] Supra, 129. [5] Supra, 139. [6] Supra, 136. [7] Supra, 137.

[8] Supra, 15. [9] Supra, 156. [10] Supra, 156.

> shall by force or guile render a people alien to itself, without, in the nature of things, being able to make of it either another people or pure, unadulterated human beings . . . .
>
> Not since mankind was divided into many "peoples, races, and tongues" has there been any possibility whatsoever, humanly speaking, of a mere human being, unless in the naked wilderness, for elsewhere one finds only national human beings, be they Hebrew, Greek, English or Danish.
>
> Therefore, when some one people, Egyptians or Chinese, Romans or Germans, declare themselves to be the only rightful human beings, after whom all other nations must either pattern themselves or be regarded as dumb creatures, toil like domestic animals or be hunted like wild ones, mark you, it merely proves that the Egyptians or Chinese, Romans or Germans, can themselves have very little humanity in them.[1]

Therefore, Grundtvig would reject any sociological analysis as being the complete description of a people which did not give due place to the folk-spirit. A people is more than an assemblage of human beings living in a particular area and bound together by social, economic and political ties. The essential thing for Grundtvig is that in a people, there exists a life-power, mysterious (as is everything living), which permeates the people from within, which has created its history and fashioned its life.[2] This life-power is what is called the folk-spirit. The folk-spirit is what is disclosed in the mother-tongue.[3] Man, according to Grundtvig, is not an eternal, timeless soul that can get along as well or as ill in one place as in another.[4]

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[1] Grundtvig, in Koch, 126.

[2] Supra, 124.

[3] Supra, 133.

[4] Supra, 136.

This was the character of Grundtvig's "discovery of the national,"[1] and this is of decisive importance in the understanding and evaluation of his idea of order.

Order, for Grundtvig, means harmony with the national folk-spirit. The political and religious structures should derive from this source. The individual member of society should be so educated as to be in harmony with this state of affairs.[2] If he is, then he will acknowledge the authority of the ruler who rules in harmony with the principles outlined above. Man is not basically an "ego" but a link in a larger national continuity.[3] Thus, man is joined not to timeless eternal ideas but to a particular concrete history.[4] Body is included as well as soul.

Grundtvig's interpretation of history was in analogy to man's natural development from childhood through youth and manhood to old age.[5] History, according to Grundtvig, follows that sequence just as does a person.[6] That is, historical events occur according to natural laws. There is a continuity between the various subdivisions of history and life.

The order that constitutes society must be in harmony with this continuity.[7] When this is the case, then the three parts of society, family, civic and religious, will perform their function in a satisfactory way.[1] The function of the churchly, sacramental community is to give what the earthly community seeks, namely righteousness, peace and joy.[2]

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[1] Supra, 150. [2] Supra, 145. [3] Supra, 141.

[4] Supra, 136. [5] Supra, 148. [6] Supra, 149.

[7] Supra, 151.

Our evaluation of Grundtvig's notion of order is that it is comparatively more satisfactory than Kierkegaard's because it is not limited to any one portion of society, as Kierkegaard's was limited to the state. Thus the notion of order is applied more naturally to all aspects of society. However, when Grundtvig conceives of order in terms of some form of spirit, this would seem to embue order with a certain disorderliness which would deny its own nature. Again, however, Grundtvig further conceives of spirit in terms of its historical manifestation, a formulation which appears to provide sufficient structure to spirit to overcome the misgivings.

iii. Authority as a Necessary Component of Society.--The second element in our definition of society was the element of authority. In terms of the criteria for evaluation which we have noted above, authority is to be defined as that characteristic of society which provides the locus and the sanction for order and stability. Authority has as its nature or characteristic function the character of finality. That is, authority was the last resort or ultimate appeal from which the individual can conceive no higher judge. Thus, it can be seen that the question of the location of authority is of the utmost importance, whether this authority should be located within or without the stated constitutional structures of the given historical organization. If within, then the society can be said to be inherently stable. If without, the society is not inherently stable although it may be stable enough for the time being. Authority is by nature indivisible. If it were divisible, it would not be authority. If any appeal from it were recognized, it would not be the authority that it had claimed.[1]

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[1] *Supra*, 152.

[2] *Supra*, 168.

For the clarification of what we mean by authority, we might provide some characteristic examples. Authority has been located within the state itself. The state has been considered to be the last and most supreme authority, from which no appeal was possible.

Again, authority has been located in truth. Concretely, this has meant that authority has been identified with one or another particular philosophy, such philosophies as taught they were themselves expressions of final truth. The appeal to natural law would be another expression of this practice.

Authority has been located in the people, conceived democratically. The expression of this authority would be through vote, whether counted and tabulated in response to a referendum on a stated issue or whether to elect representatives who then exercise authority in the name of the people, so long as their term of office shall last.

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[1] It is true that there can be provisional authorities, "lesser" authorities which act on one level, subject to the right of appeal to some higher level. However, this simply is a case of some stated agency taking its authority from some other source, which source is in fact the actual authority. The provisional authority is only the reflection of the actual authority. Authority is defined as that agency to which ultimate loyalty is paid, and from which no right of appeal is recognized.

Again, authority has been located in God, whether expressed through a theocratic rule by the priests as God's proper representatives, or expressed as the right of appeal to divine law if certain actions of the state were considered unjust.

Whatever the authority, the important factor is that authority is considered unique and indivisible. Those who, for example, consider Truth to be the ultimate authority, transcending, for example, religious truth, particularly as expressed by the priests of the epoch, would not think of doubting the authority of this Truth, any more than they would be willing to abide by the arbitration of a group of solemn priests passing on the correctness of their actions.

(1) In Kierkegaard's conception of authority, we observe that he denies the absolute authority of the state, granting political structures only relative authority within the ethical sphere of being.[1] Kierkegaard locates authority in truth as subjectively validated.[2] Kierkegaard's expressions also indicate that he located authority in God.[3] The problem arising in this regard is that Kierkegaard never provided an unambiguous means by which God's will could be known directly and without irony.[4] Kierkegaard specifically attacked the priests[5] and in addition refused to claim for himself any form of direct revelation or authority.[6] The only authority he could claim on his premises would be that unique authority of subjective inwardness. This would not be absolute authority, but only relative authority, because absolute authority

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[1] _Supra_, 44.
[2] _Supra_, 19.
[3] _Supra_, 74.
[4] _Supra_, 20.
[5] _Supra_, 57.
[6] _Supra_, 181.

belongs only to God.[1]

Kierkegaard wrote: "Authority is a specific quality which, coming from elsewhere, becomes qualitatively apparent when the content of the message or of the action is posited as indifferent.[2] What Kierkegaard had in mind is a concept of authority which was similar to the concept of "majesty" which we examined in Chapter III.[3] Majesty was divided into relative and absolute majesty. In a similar way, authority was different in "the sphere of immanence" from within "the sphere of the paradox-religious."[4]

Within the sphere of immanence, authority "is inconceivable" or else "it can only be thought of as something transitory."[5] It was within the religious sphere that the definition of authority noted above applies. Authority is a quality of such a nature that it is shown to be authority by the fact that it is not the content of the message or the action that provides its authoritativeness. Authority is authority a priori. Kierkegaard explains his meaning by the example of a king:

> A king, it is assumed, has authority. Nevertheless, there is something disturbing in the idea of a king who is witty or an artist. The explanation of this is, surely, that one naturally lays the stress on his royal authority and so by comparison looks upon the more general human marks of distinction as something transitory, as something fortuitous, inessential and disturbing.[6]

Authority, thus, was not validated by anything external to itself. Authority was not proven by logic or by genius, and whatever was so proven was not authority. Authority, then, was a matter of position, of right. Relative authority was what was possessed by politicians or policemen in the performance of their duty. Absolute authority is possessed only by God.[1]

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[1] Supra, 74.

[2] Kierkegaard, The Present Age, "Of the Difference between a Genius and an Apostle," 96.

[3] Supra, 53.

[4] Supra, 52.

[5] Kierkegaard, The Present Age, 97.

[6] Ibid., 100.

(2) Grundtvig held that authority would be exercised by the religious part of society in continuity with the civic. That is to say, authority, like order, derived from spirit and thus was essentially one, unlike Kierkegaard who divided authority into superior and subordinate parts, and denied the reality of the subordinate part.[2] Grundtvig's appeal, in pressing for civic reforms, was always to the folk-spirit.[3] Therefore, he supported both the king and the desire for representation in assembly.[4]

The one point at which Grundtvig's strong belief in continuity breaks down is in the face of death. The authority which Grundtvig believed to be ultimate was spirit,[5] and the order which he believed appropriate for the communication of this authority was the order of natural development, a sequence which history followed and which education ought to follow.[6] Death is the absence of spirit and hence the breakdown of order. Death is the common enemy of God and man. This was the view of the Scandinavian mythology, a view which Grundtvig shared. Therefore, all human life takes the form of an heroic struggle against death. "Death in all its forms is man's hereditary foe.[7] Grundtvig was never able to reconcile himself or his thought to death, which stood for him as the great ravager of life. Therefore, Grundtvig limited his view, as Kierkegaard remarked, to this world and its enjoyment.[1]

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[1] Ibid., 99. [2] Ibid., 97. [3] Supra, 131.

[4] Supra, 139. [5] Supra, 143 [6] Supra, 148. [7] Koch, 144.

This is why authority, in Grundtvig's conception, was limited to factors which may seem to us exceedingly narrow in scope. The national folk-spirit had no eternal validity, in Grundtvig's view.[2] Thus, there was the possibility that authority would disappear with the end of the folk-spirit. Grundtvig did not speculate along these lines. Death remained for him an absolute barrier for thought as well as deed. It was almost as if he were attempting to prove that the understanding was limited by the mythological perspective of one's given folk-spirit.

iv. The Good in Relation to Society.--In our criteria for evaluation we stated that the notion of the general welfare would be treated separately from the definition of society as such. Therefore, let us turn to Kierkegaard and Grundtvig in order to evaluate their conceptions of well-being.

(1) On the topic of individual well-being we assign a mixed result to the social philosophy of Kierkegaard. On the one hand Kierkegaard, by stressing individual values, provided the individual with a unique opportunity for the free development of spirit in his inward life.[3] Kierkegaard provided for the detachment of the individual from political life, with politics remaining on a subordinate level of religious concern

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[1] Supra, 165, 166. [2] Supra, 136. [3] Supra, 83.

and activity.[1] Since the individual was always free in his inward spirit, no external pressure could impinge upon his freedom.[2]

On the other hand, Kierkegaard's strong distinction between the natural world and the ideal world, a distinction which grew more pronounced in his later writings, accentuated the inner tension within an individual.[3] Kierkegaard's rejection of marriage and family relationships,[4] and of social life at any level[5] would not contribute to the well-being of many persons. They would be placed in such extreme tension with the world that they would be unable to function or to be at peace within themselves. The fundamental consideration in this regard is Kierkegaard's theory of number (the numerable as opposed to the unique; quantity as opposed to quality).[6]

Kierkegaard's rejection of number (quantity) as a valid factor in human relationships[7] has important and far-reaching implications. For example, an individual customarily compares his own behavior with the behavior of others for the purpose of allowing his own behavior to be either reinforced by the similar behavior of others or altered by the dissimilar behavior of others. It is considered scientific method to compare two particulars for the purpose of noting the unexpected differences between the two. These observed differences, however, are expected in turn to be confirmed by further observation. A divergence which has no other confirmation is not considered significant but rather accidental.

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[1] Supra, 46. [2] Supra, 14. [3] Supra, 36. [4] Supra, 33.

[5] Supra, 69. [6] Supra, 67. [7] Supra, 68.

In human relationships individuals have generally accustomed themselves to the rejection of the usefulness of statements by those who cannot demonstrate that they have had the same basic kind of experience as the other person. If the common experience is missing, which amounts to a type of numerical consideration, the other person is said "not to understand" how one feels.[1]

When the concept of "number" was rejected by Kierkegaard,[2] this rejection involves much more than objecting to the press or to mob rule or to the vote as the means for determining public policy. It involves in addition the calling into question of the means whereby the individual determines the correctness of his own behavior.[3] The

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[1] For example, if only the unique, the un-countable, is true, the implication seems to follow that experience is useless in dealing with human problems. To cite one case, a trained counselor would be capable of dealing with the troubled person only the first time he encountered that "type" of case. The encounter between two individuals is unique and cannot be classified. Therefore, if a trained counselor depends upon his training for the way in which he treats the counselee, he is mistaken. For when a counselee says to the counselor, "You have no idea what I've been through," he is literally correct. When the counselor thinks to himself, "I know exactly what you've been through, because I read about your type of case in my psychology textbooks," his approach is mistaken. Even if the counselor relies upon his own personal clinical experience, the moment he classifies his patient, he is--by that very act of classification--unable to help him. It is only the inner appropriation on the part of the patient which is significant, not the external opportunity.

[2] *Supra*, 29.

[3] Thus it might be said, "Law is the science of applying the inapplicable to the individual." To carry the argument further, it might be said that if the regulations and pressures of society are weighed against the individual so that it is impossible for the individual to function effectively (in a positive sense) or creatively, then the appropriate moral action would not be the rigid one of subscribing to all the rules when the rules themselves will ruin him. Rather, the moral action would be defined as that self-consistent activity which will enable the individual to live satisfactorily. This theory would not be immoralism, for immoralism would sanction

The types of experience he judges to be valuable or useful, the kinds of actions he will continue and allow to become part of his character have to a greater or lesser extent depended upon considerations of number.

(2) How adequately does Grundtvig provide for the development of individual well-being? As was the case with Kierkegaard, we must come to a mixed conclusion. Grundtvig's doctrine of continuity[1] is positive, while his subordination of the individual to the group[2] is negative in this context.

Continuity, for Grundtvig, meant that the religious must be in harmony with the human,[3] that the natural development of the individual builds on the preceding stage of preparation.[4] In education this meant that the child's development would not be forced by artificial theories. Instead, the child's propensity for fantasy and story and myth would be the means for the educational process.[5] This provided one of the strengths of the Grundtvigian movement. It became an enduring influence because education was utilized to carry on the kind of reforms of church and civic life which he thought desirable. Kierkegaard developed no educational theory. Kierkegaard realized, as Grundtvig did not, that education itself would change, thus mutating the content of that education.[6] If a thinker were to entrust his thought to a "disciple" of a school for

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the functioning of an individual effectively in a negative sense, functioning in a way which would cause the individual to live unsatisfactorily (to hate himself, to be hunted by the police, or something of the kind).

This argument, as outlined here, would not destroy society for the sake of the individual, but neither would it allow the individual to be destroyed by society.

[1] _Supra_, 110. [2] _Supra_, 139. [3] _Supra_, 113. [4] _Supra_, 143.

[5] _Supra_, 148. [6] _Supra_, 27.

transmission, that thought would be fundamentally altered in the process.[1] Transmission blurs "the individual" in Kierkegaard's sense.[2]

Kierkegaard perceived correctly the inner disintegration of the Christian religion in the sense of "Christendom."[3] What he did not do after that point was to outline how human culture could be reformed, that is, how the faith and the cultus could be reunited in the formation of new culture.

Grundtvig's strength may be said to lie in his having provided just such a direction. Although Grundtvig was not as profoundly attuned to the philosophical trends of the times, although Grundtvig thought that a simple re-affirmation of the Apostles' Creed would be sufficient,[4] nevertheless he did provide a direction for the spiritual future of his society, although that society was limited to the Scandinavian.[5] This direction which he provided was, of course, the formal idea of the method of education. Education was not individual, but social.[6] It was not social in the institutional sense of structure by the state. Education (in the Folk Schools for higher education) was social in the sense that a group of families would combine together to provide for the employment of a teacher and for the supervision of the education of their children.[7] Grundtvig had a program of education which he thought proper. Nevertheless, no matter what his original conception, it remains true that the creativity of an association of families--thus overcoming the deficiencies of any individual family--could provide for an education which would equip their children with spiritual values which they consider important. This would indeed be a "School for Life"[1] in the best sense of that word, a school which is always in process, dynamic enough to meet the changing times in terms of the resources and needs of the society formed to make such a provision in educational terms. The only limitations would be the limitations of the society itself.

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[1] Supra, 181. [2] Supra, 40. [3] Supra, 56. [4] Supra, 127.

[5] Supra, 134. [6] Supra, 146.

[7] Oluf Olsen, Grundtvig's Church (Copenhagen: J. H. Schultz, Universitets-Bogtrykkeri, n.d.), 12.

Thus, we have marked the negative element in Grundtvig's provision for individual well-being. That was, namely, the subordination of the individual to the group.[2] Although Grundtvig did not put his theory this bluntly, it is as if he is saying that the reality of the individual is not complete until he is part of a group.

Grundtvig, then, tried to provide for the well-being of the individual by relating him essentially to a national group.[3] Kierkegaard rejected this course and instead insisted upon subjective inwardness of the individual as the way to whatever well-being was appropriate to man as a rational being.[4]

Whereas Kierkegaard rejected "the world as it is" in the strongest polemical terms,[5] Grundtvig counseled adjustment and continuity.[6] Grundtvig was content with agitating for what Kierkegaard considered relatively minor adjustments in political structure.[7]

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[1] Supra, 143. [2] Supra, 142. [3] Supra, 133. [4] Supra, 84.

[5] Supra, 83. [6] Supra, 113. [7] Supra, 169.

3. Conclusion

The important concluding question for us to consider is what place social theory can have in existential philosophy. Does existentialism produce such a void of social feeling that it must be supplemented by the diverse theories of Grundtvigianism (for Kierkegaard), Nazism (for Heidegger) and Marxism (for Sartre)? Kierkegaard's attack upon "Christendom" historically spoiled prospects of the formation of a church assembly.[1] The clergy held timidly to "the present arrangement." The younger clergymen were driven by Kierkegaard's attack over to Grundtvig, who appeared to provide a safe rock which the attack did not reach.[2]

Historical considerations aside, existential philosophy seems to point correctly to the fact that no abstract principle has the right to be imposed upon human society. The attempt to impose such principles as equality, justice, and the like, upon human society has always led to some of history's most unfortunate episodes. Of course, Kierkegaard did not use the example of history to prove the results of such a disregard for the individual, believing that history in no sense proves anything.[3]

It seems evident that no abstract principle exists that is not held by an individual.[4] Therefore, no abstract principle would appear to have any claim to validity if that claim were not inclusive of the rights of the individual concerned. Further, one obeys the law not for abstract and formal reasons, but for concrete reasons, psychological or practical. Laws or customs are obeyed because of the amount of personal inconvenience which would result from the transgression.[1]

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[1] Lindhardt, 122. [2] Ibid. [3] Supra, 170.

[4] Thus it could be argued that no social structure--no law, no principles--is abstract from a person. For example, what is called "the law" is a policeman, active or lazy; law is a judge, gruff and irritable, hurrying through his docket of cases so he can do something else that he likes; law is a jailer, closing

Many factors in existential thought may be said to oppose the development of a concept of social philosophy. The aversion to systematization means that any topical approach to existential writings is mistaken. Again, the explicit subjectivity of existential thought would seem to rule out the development of any unified and universally valid social theory. Existentialism criticizes objective social theory effectively but then refuses to develop a positive social theory of its own. The value system intrinsic to existential thought appears to preclude its social extension on its own terms. Even when commenting upon social issues, Kierkegaard has as his primary interest the subjective apprehension of the truth.[2] Truth is "royal," never mediated by anything, especially by "the crowd."[3] Kierkegaard appeals for the

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iron doors, turning the key; law is people applying regulations according to whether those people (officials) think they will be supported in their decision by their superiors, by those who have the power to fire or to discipline or to reward or to annoy them.

[1] Thus, for example, the motel owner in Georgia who allows Negroes to swim in his motel pool does so because of the penalties and adverse publicity which he would suffer if he refused to obey the law.

On the other hand, for example, the restaurant owner in Georgia who closes his restaurant rather than serve Negroes does so because he thinks that by defying the law he will personally gain more than he will lose: friends, great publicity, and eventually the governorship of the State of Georgia.

[2] *Supra*, 15.

[3] *Supra*, 68.

authentic "Individual," characterized by inwardness.[1] Kierkegaard leaves the social extension of his individual set of values for others to develop. Social relations--clearly in the political sphere, less clearly in the religious--are not considered of ultimate importance, or of eternal "interest." The leap of faith is made by the individual.[2] The choice is made by the individual acting in subjective inwardness.[3]

It can be argued that decisions made by individuals as part of a group are more binding than decisions made alone. The commitment to the group may be said to be an enabling and enforcing factor. This contention might be supported by polls and surveys and interviews. Although Kierkegaard would object to such an argument on the grounds that no numerical process--as, for example, a survey--can tell anything valid about the inward and individual process of human choice, still it could be contended that the class similarities which exist between persons are real and are not confined to the biological level alone.

Therefore, the support which a group may grant to decisions made by individuals could be seen as significant and compatible with inwardness as such. In some such manner what might be called an individualistic existentialism could be transformed into a universalistic humanism. Without accepting all the details of Grundtvig's theories, without going so far as to say, as he did, that we must not be concerned with the achievement of an individual but only with the development of a people, we might agree that it is possible for the individual life to be reinforced in a positive way by some aspects of the group process. To say this is not to disagree with one of Kierkegaard's most significant points, that after all irony is the only possible mode of communication from the depths.

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[1] _Supra_, 67. [2] _Supra_, 17.

[3] Some striking similarities can be noted between Kierkegaard and Ockham, particularly on the subject of the arbitrary action of the will.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding chapters we have argued that an adequate theory of society can be developed only when proper account is taken of the kinds of issues raised by Kierkegaard and Grundtvig. If society may be defined as that entity within human experience which is characterized necessarily by order and authority, then Kierkegaard's social thought is significant for emphasizing the importance of the Individual in judging the quality of social life, while Grundtvig's significance is seen in his emphasis upon education as the means for the transmission of the good in social life from one generation to the next.

1. The Importance of the Individual

Kierkegaard taught that the quality of social life cannot be judged objectively by the number of children or the glory of its institutions or its distinguished past history or its present scientific attainments.[1] The quality of social life can be judged only by the Individual.[2] The public events of the world are of little consequence to the Individual; all that matters to him is his own interior history, the internal events of his own subjective life.

Kierkegaard reasoned that no truth for an existing Individual was possible except subjective truth. Similarly, no truth could be communicated objectively, because truth was dependent upon subjective appropriation for its validation within existence. "Truth is subjectivity."[3]

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[1] *Supra*, 70. [2] *Supra*, 81. [3] *Supra*, 17.

This was not to deny that there was such a thing as objective, systematic truth. Mathematics, for example, was recognized to be both certain and systematic. But such objective truth was not the sort of truth upon which a person would stake his whole life.[1]

It was at this point that Grundtvig differed. Grundtvig maintained that no individual was complete who did not understand and accept the power and value of society. Society was an objective entity, and the spirit in the individual person was basically continuous with the spirit in the nation and in the Church. Society was necessary for the completion of the life of the individual personality.[2]

We may characterize Kierkegaard's theory of truth as a theory of probability, believing that objective truth was not possible for the Individual, limited as he was in space and time. Yet, because the Individual needed to make decisions on some basis, Kierkegaard supplemented his probabilism with a Jamesian will to believe, the leap of faith.[3]

On this basis Kierkegaard believed that the Individual had no right to resign his decision-making power to any supra-individual entity such as the crowd. The crowd was untruth.[4] Only the Individual had the capacity to know and to act on the truth for himself.

Closely related to his argument that truth could be known only in subjectivity was his statement that truth could not be communicated objectively, but only indirectly. We noted in Chapter II that Kierkegaard held that the only decisive factor about truth was that it should be understood.[1]

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[1] Supra, 15. [2] Supra, 94. [3] Supra, 17. [4] Supra, 18.

Objective thinking could be easily communicated, Kierkegaard conceded. It could be memorized and repeated from memory.[2] Therefore, if such thinking were the truth, education could be conducted by rote to communicate a perfectly adequate body of knowledge for the next generation to learn and benefit from. Kierkegaard rejected such an approach because he believed the key point in communication to be that each person must come to understand the truth by and for himself. In other words, education conducted on a direct basis would never be able to bridge the last gap between its external proclamation and its inward appropriation by the single individual. The problem was not hearing but agreeing. Truth would not be increased by turning up the volume.

The best possible approach to education, according to Kierkegaard, was indirect. Thus he aimed his entire literary production at indirectly introducing his readers to religious truth and value.[3]

2. The Transmission of Values by Means of Education

If we compare Grundtvig's theories with the ideas presented above, we are able to note that Grundtvig rejected the theory that the Individual was of such key importance. The individual was partial and limited, requiring completion through the spirit as expressed through the Church, the nation, and the school.[4] That is, Grundtvig can be understood as opposing the extreme individualism often imputed to Kierkegaard.

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[1] Supra, 18. [2] Supra, 26. [3] Supra, 8. [4] Supra, 133.

Grundtvig held that it was unrealistic to act as if there would be no continuation of the human race beyond the present generation. Rather we should seek to use and to improve educational institutions so that they might better serve for the transmission of spiritual values. "Schools for Life" ought to replace the "black schools" where Latin was taught and the spirit of the children squelched.[1] The School for Life would follow the natural development of the life of the child.

Freedom became the most important social value, for Grundtvig.[2] Freedom was necessary to provide the environment in which the spirit could attain its maximum development. External pressures and repression were inimical to the spirit. This freedom, thus, was freedom for the development of the folk-spirit, rather than freedom for the individual expression of belief.[3]

The specific curriculum which Grundtvig envisaged was based upon the cultural and mythological heritage of the people as expressed through the mother-tongue.[4] In this way the folk-spirit of the people could be revealed through history. The citizens, properly informed concerning their cultural heritage, would thereby become responsible citizens in the newly democratic country. They would then cooperate enthusiastically and spiritedly with the native folk-spirit as that spirit became manifest through history.[5]

Thus it appears that Grundtvig provided a useful corrective to the existential thought of Kierkegaard. Thought, feeling, and intuition are certainly not possessed by one person in isolation from all others in the universe. This correction, as provided by Grundtvig, amounts to a warning against a common misinterpretation of Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard did not intend to reject society in every possible form, ideal as well as natural. Rather, his prime interest was in the increase of quality within society, specifically in that unique form of society which he believed could become ideal in the spiritual sense, namely, the ideal Church.[1]

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[1] _Supra_, 145. [2] _Supra_, 132. [3] _Supra_, 133. [4] _Supra_, 134. [5] _Supra_, 152.

3. Theory of Society

Grundtvig's theory of society rested upon his notion of spirit, which derived from two sources, German idealism[2] and Lutheran theology.[3] There was a fundamental continuity which could be traced between the various manifestations of spirit in history,[4] the nation,[5] and the church.[6] If freedom were secured by legislative means, Grundtvig was convinced, then the spirit could no longer be artificially confined but would be free to develop naturally.

Kierkegaard's theory of society was based on his belief that sociality was part of man's nature as an animal.[7] Thus actual society, the family,[8] the press,[9] the state,[10] and the church[11] were all by their natural constitution less than ideal. The best that could be hoped for under the conditions of actual society was that it would become the best of its type.

The ideal was spiritual, according to Kierkegaard.[12] His theory of ideal society was dependent upon his rejection of "number." By the term "number" Kierkegaard meant whatever could be counted and classified, the non-unique, the quantitative.[1] Thus ideal society in the ultimate sense was dependent on the unique, non-numerable, qualitative character of God, the Church, and the Individual.[2]

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[1] _Supra_, 86. [2] _Supra_, 122. [3] _Supra_, 102. [4] _Supra_, 112. [5] _Supra_, 133. [6] _Supra_, 125. [7] _Supra_, 40. [8] _Supra_, 30. [9] _Supra_, 39. [10] _Supra_, 50. [11] _Supra_, 56. [12] _Supra_, 73.

According to Kierkegaard's analysis, de-humanization was the result when the Individual was treated as if he could be numbered in a quantitative manner. We noted that Kierkegaard's rejection of the reliability of number suggests some far-reaching implications. Such disciplines as counseling, education, and law could be re-examined in this light. The implication appears to be that any form of behavior which depends upon comparative judgments is not valid for man as spirit.[3] According to Kierkegaard, it is a serious mistake to treat Individuals statistically, as if the differences between them were arbitrary and accidental, as if they could be safely ignored.

Kierkegaard believed that the only significant values in society in general were Individual in quality. Both Kierkegaard and Grundtvig were concerned with the increase of value and its transmission, Grundtvig more obviously with his educational theory, but Kierkegaard just as profoundly with his theory of indirect, subjective communication of truth. Thus, Kierkegaard wrote: "The 'moment' is when the person is there, the right person."[4]

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[1] Supra, 18. [2] Supra, 71. [3] Supra, 43. [4] Kierkegaard, The Last Years, 344.

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ABSTRACT

THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHIES OF SØREN KIERKEGAARD AND NIKOLAI FREDERIK SEVERIN GRUNDTVIG

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This dissertation is devoted to the exposition and analysis of the social philosophies of Søren Kierkegaard and N. F. S. Grundtvig. Their descriptions of society are noted, as well as their prescriptions for its improvement.

Kierkegaard's description of actual society was based upon the belief that secular social entities were the ethical expression of natural datum. Thus the family, the press, and the state were expressions of the animal part of man. Marriage was viewed as an ethical expression for the propagation of the species. The daily press was viewed as "an immense abstraction" which wields the power of the crowd over the individual. The state was viewed as existing for the purpose of restraining crime rather than for the promotion of virtue. According to this view, the state has as its highest aim the attainment of an epicurean kind of peace, a peace appropriate to the animal rather than the spiritual

character of man.

The church provided a more difficult problem for Kierkegaard's thought. The actual church appeared to him to have forsaken its proper spiritual constitution in favor of a sort of earthly peace. The actual church neglected to recognize and interpret the suffering which was the only genuine mark of a "witness to the truth." Suffering was the result of the tension between the temporal and the eternal within the individual who chooses to live in the religious stage on life's way. The actual church had attempted to replace suffering with enjoyment. It was for this reason that Kierkegaard denounced the church as it was.

Kierkegaard's prescriptions for the improvement of society were concentrated on the sacred social entity, the church as it ought to be, the ideal, spiritual church. The ideal church was both possible and desirable, according to Kierkegaard. The ideal was attainable at least insofar as man is spirit. What man naturally loves is finitude. Yet he also aspires after infinity, and the tension produced in the process is the suffering to which we have referred. Kierkegaard believed that once the suffering of the religious sphere of existence were accepted, the relation between the ideal and the actual church would become plain. That is to say, when the individual accepted the truth in subjective inwardness, the connection between the solitary individual and the others in the ideal church would become apparent. When one is "primitive" and "literally alone," this also means that he will be "alone with God" and consequently one will have "the human race on one's conscience." It is only through those individuals who are related by suffering to the ideal that society in an ideal sense can be either comprehended or produced.

The ambiguity in Kierkegaard's use of the term "ideal" is to be noted. That is, actual society is in principle not ideal. Actual society can be ideal only in the sense of being the best of its type. Its type is natural, the expression of the animal part of man as an existing creature. Thus, while one can distinguish within discussions of the family and the state between bad and better of its type, its type is in principle inferior to the ideal in the sense of the spiritual. The actual is not a stage on the way to the ideal, but an expression of different and opposite principles. The actual not only fails, it fails necessarily. It remains natural and numerical, not spiritual and individual.

Kierkegaard's contrast between the numerical and the unique or individual is seen as basic to his social thought. By the numerical--or simply, "number"--Kierkegaard meant the numerable, the quantitative, whatever was not unique. The numerical meant that the differences between members of a class could be ignored as accidental and unessential. Thus, whenever the individual human being was treated as if he could be numbered, as if particular differences were essentially unimportant, de-humanization was the result, as, for example, in the "crowd." By "crowd" Kierkegaard did not mean the ignorant masses or the peasants or any such supposedly inferior group. Instead, he meant any group or combination whatsoever above the individual. The crowd was one of the several things which tend to abolish personality and thus make authentic individual existence impossible.

N. F. S. Grundtvig's description of society was based on the concept of spirit. Grundtvig applied the concept of spirit as developed by such idealists as Herder and Hegel to ecclesiastical polity and social organization, in the church, the nation, and the school. Spirit, according to Grundtvig, was correctly viewed as a "higher power of life," which finds its living expression in the living language of a native land. As applied to the church, nation, and school, Grundtvig was of the opinion that the principal requirement of the spirit was freedom, freedom to develop naturally and without hindrance. Such freedom, it will be noted, is not freedom for individual dissent, but rather freedom for the folk-spirit to develop fully. The individual was completed by his membership in a group.

Grundtvig's prescriptions for the improvement of society, in accordance with the principles above, were chiefly political. He was elected to parliament, advocated the loosening of the parish bond and the liberalization of freedom of speech and of the press.

Grundtvig's key significance is seen in his attempt to deal with the continuity of the ideal with the actual, the relevance of one for the other, the embodiment of one in the other. This contrasts sharply with Kierkegaard, who emphasized the discontinuity between the actual and the ideal. According to Kierkegaard, the only way to realize the ideal is by an act of the will, by the "leap" of faith, the subjective appropriation of truth. Kierkegaard's argument is based on the consideration that the individual, limited as he is in time, is obliged to make decisions on some basis. These decisions are those by which he lives his life, yet the basis for them is, in the strict sense, objectively uncertain.

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Grundtvig's conception of continuity between the actual and the ideal was based upon the content of the ancient northern myths which expressed the continuity between heaven and earth, divine and human. This follows Grundtvig's appreciation of some parts of the philosophy of Schelling, who had seen world history as the continuous expression of the Godhead, in which each nation and each epoch has its place assigned to it. The myths of the peoples were expressions of their proper place in this divine scheme. Grundtvig believed that the schools must communicate to the nation's youth this historico-poetic knowledge. The school should provide national knowledge, folk-culture, and folk-enlightenment. Thus it can be seen that Grundtvig's main concern was with the development of peoples rather than the achievements of individuals.

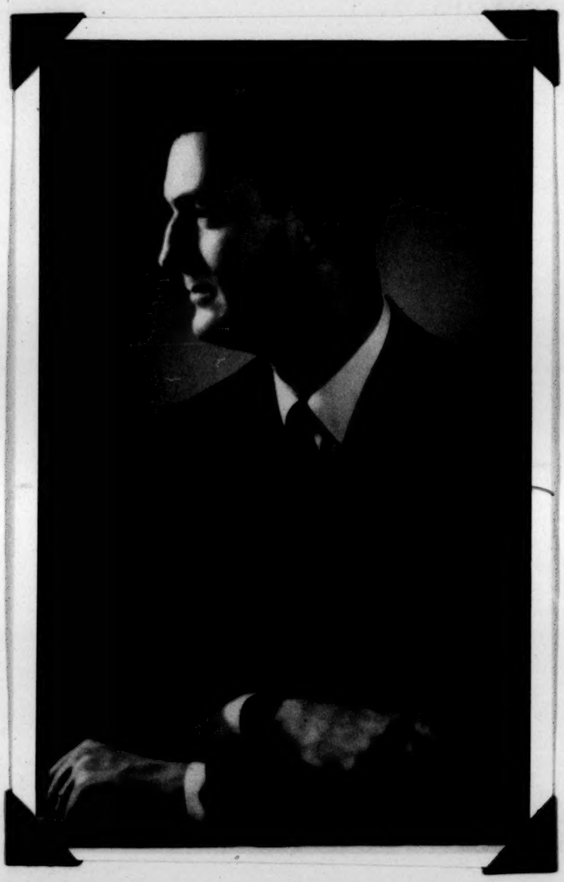
The basic difficulty which arises in this regard is the standard idealistic ambivalence. The spirit is real only when it is incarnate, yet the incarnate form constrains the spirit. The embodiment of spirit is its denial. When embodied the spirit becomes partial--Scandinavian--and limited--to one mother-tongue--and earth-bound.

Kierkegaard, on the other hand, emphasized the discontinuity between time and eternity, heaven and earth. He believed in an infinite qualitative distinction between the one and the other.

Grundtvig had developed a strong theory of community because community was the value-bearing unit of his social theory. Community was the nation, the folk, or, in basically the same terms, the national church, all similarly characterized by the mother-tongue and the cultural heritage of the fatherland.

Kierkegaard, on the contrary, would have no part of such ideas. He had no theory of the natural community, except in the sense of state police-power, whose proper function was the restraint of wrong-doers. Such a conception is markedly different from Grundtvig's conception of the community as the proper locus of the spiritual life. For Kierkegaard, the only form of ideal society in the highest, spiritual sense, was the ideal church, modeled after the example of Christ and characterized by suffering rather than peace or enjoyment. For Grundtvig, enjoyment was a proper part of the religious life, the enjoyment of family life and of such social activities as the singing of songs.

It can be seen from the above considerations that the differences between Kierkegaard and Grundtvig were considerable and profound, and not, as a recent publication has stated, the result of a "misunderstanding" between the two thinkers. For Grundtvig, society was the locus of value. For Kierkegaard, the only locus of value was the individual, or the "exception."



AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF THE CANDIDATE

St. Elmo Nauman, Jr. was born in Phoenix, Arizona on March 11, 1935. He spent most of his early years in California with his parents, the Reverend St. Elmo Nauman and Frances Wolf Nauman. He received his education at the University of Chicago (B. A., '54), Berkeley Divinity School in California (B. D., '57), Andover-Newton Theological School, and at Boston University.

Ordained in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1957, he has served as minister of a small church in Lowell, Massachusetts, as associate minister of the First Congregational Church (UCC) of Berea, Ohio, minister of the Franklin Congregational Christian Church (UCC) in Franklin, Virginia, and pastor of The First Christian Church (UCC) of Philadelphia.

He taught philosophy--both the history and the problems of philosophy--at Christopher Newport College, of the College of William and Mary, in Virginia.